MY BALKAN LOG

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BY

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" The Surgeon's Log,"
" The Night Nurse," etc.

WITH NUMEROUS ILLUSTRATIONS

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To

My Comrades

in Serbia

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CHAPTER I

GETTING THERE

Athens and the curious behaviour of the Hun—The American 'drummer' and what he really wanted—"Our Mr Brown"—Salonika and Charlie the dragoman—Introducing Steve—Subsidized War News—Greek soldiers—The Via Egnatia, the Muezzin, and a vision of the centuries—The man from "The Adelphi."

WE were a very happy family—French, British, Belgian—on the tubby little Messageries Maratimes boat, until we reached the Piræus. It was October 1914, and the bond of a common danger, common hope drew us together in a wonderful mutual understanding. In the mornings we, the British, did 'physical jerks' on the well-deck, watched by the passengers from the promenade above; in the afternoons our men were lectured on their duties to the sick and wounded; in the evenings, under the Mediterranean stars, everyone sang patriotic songs, the Marseillaise, God save the King, and Tipperary—always Tipperary. At all hours everyone talked to everyone else, the barrier of language acting rather as a stimulus to effort. It was a marvellously glowing time, you will remember, October 1914, a time of tense emotion, intoxicating, fervorous, star-gazing. How far away it all seems now.

We were happy, as I have said, until we reached the Piræus and the family began to break up. There also, for the first time, we began to come in contact with people who were critical, unsympathetic, even hostile to our common cause, people who looked at us and judged, from the outside.

I had my first experience of it coming down from the

Acropolis, saturated with the calm white sculptured loveliness of the Parthenon, feeling that every moment was an almost too perfect realisation of anticipated joy. It was particularly inappropriate, at that moment, that my path should have crossed that of a tweed-clad fellow, the back of whose close-cropped head seemed to melt into a red roll of fat behind his ears. He glared at my uniform, stepped sideways, and spat on the ground—an act which seemed to me unpleasantly unnecessary. I stopped deliberately and told him what I thought of him, adding as a Parthian shot some entirely imaginary aspersions on his family connections. Of course he did not understand a word. I knew that, but the fact did not in the least detract from my malicious joy. We parted, perfectly absurdly, in mutual gesticulation, both roseate with patriotism. Then I made my way to the ship as a haven, only to find the happy family feeling was no more. We had filled up with Greeks, Bulgars, Roumanians, Jews, nondescript Levantines bound for Salonika, and, last but not least, had taken on an American ' drummer,' who said he was travelling, via Dedeagatch, through to Constantinople.

There was no avoiding the drummer. He was a large, rubicund person, full of effusive bonhomie. No group was sacred to him. That night we found him at our table, and he monopolised the conversation at dinner, talking with a mixture of shrewdness and sentimentality, rather over-characteristically American, giving us intimate details of his own life, birthplace, income, etc., and apparently expecting us to do the same.

Very soon he learnt all there was to tell: that there were six of us, doctors, each with two orderlies; and that we were joining the Serbian Army. That set him off in an ecstacy of admiration for our courage and unselfishness, which naturally made us all feel very embarrassed, for though one may think oneself no end of a fellow in one's heart, yet no one cares to have it

shouted at one by a stranger amongst other strangers. So, to avoid him, the little group of British doctors went up on deck immediately after dinner.

But we had reckoned without the pertinacity of the drummer. Presently he followed us, carrying a fountain-pen and a writing pad, producing from one of his pockets a small silk American flag on which he asked us to write our names. None of us wished to deface the flag of his country with our quite inconspicuous names; but he would take no denial. And so he had his wish.

While we were all signing, he expatiated. The great heart of the American nation, it seemed, was with us in this struggle against Teutonic military despotism. We, the blushing group signing our names, were going to do noble work against tremendous odds. It was likely that some or all of us would never come back. But, whether we did or not, we would write our names on the roll of fame; and it was proud he was to have our personal record on the flag of his country. While he talked we all became more and more uncomfortably shy. McLaren, the Canadian-Scotsman, our "Chief," got up hurriedly from his chair, moved fretfully to the side of the ship, looked over the rail at the dark unbroken horizon, and said:—

"We ought to be in Salonika to-night by time-table. We're two days late already."

His movement broke up the group, and we followed him to the rail. The drummer laughed, somewhat sarcastically.

"You're in the Orient now, Doc. Time doesn't count here. You'll find the Serb has one word for everything, and that's 'Sootra'—to-morrow. When it comes to pro-crast-in-ation he's some bird."

With that he left us, his object accomplished; and presently we heard his voice booming in the saloon, talking to some Smyrna Greeks. At the time we thought him a flamboyant ass. We knew nothing then

of the hyphenated-American, and the elaborate German secret service agency worked from Athens. How he must have laughed at us when he forwarded an actual autograph record of our names to his head office. It was an exquisite bit of fooling, and had we not been what we were, merely doctors, most valuable information.

What pleases me now in the retrospect is that all unwittingly, we focussed the attention of the 'drummer' upon ourselves to the total exclusion of "our Mr Brown," a dapper little man travelling in Manchester goods, who came aboard at Malta, and first raised my suspicions by always keeping in step with me when we promenaded together on deck. No matter how I broke, stopped, shortened, lengthened, changed, "our Mr Brown" always kept in step automatically, right to right, left to left. I knew the trained man by that; the drummer didn't; and so "our Mr Brown," the torpedo expert, got up to Belgrade unsuspected, and proved himself a terrific nuisance to the Austrian Monitors on the Danube for many months to come.

* * * * * * * *

But to resume. After the departure of the 'drummer' below, we found the decks nearly deserted. It was a beautiful night of stars with a lumpy sea of molten lead around us. A chill wind blew on the starboard quarter from the island-dotted Ægean, making us turn up the flaps of our military great-coats around our ears. Far out to port the dark serrated outline of the Euboean coast loomed faintly continuous as we steamed steadily onwards in the night.

Except for our small group, the deck was deserted, the warmth-loving Levantines having betaken themselves below to their cabins, or the insufferably stuffy saloon where every porthole was kept religiously screwed up throughout the voyage.

The placid little 'Commandant,' very fat and rosy, had disappeared from the bridge; and his incredibly voluble, gesticulating, tall, thin 'première capitaine' had taken his activities elsewhere. Even our English orderlies were nowhere to be seen, though the strain of choruses, somewhere aft, indicated their whereabouts. We had the ship to ourselves, until gradually the cold and the increasing night drove us also below.

Barclay and I shared what was left of a cabin after our kit-bags and accoutrements had been stowed. Affinity is a curious thing. We had met as strangers in a room in London a few weeks previously, and decided at once we should be friends. We had kept together on the troopship to Malta, wandered round there in the yellow sunshine, grown to like each other better daily, and had now, in the near unknown coming to us, firmly decided to take whatever fortune offered us, still together. Lying comfortably smoking in our warm bunks, with the choppy waves of the Ægean swishing alongside, we naturally fell into desultory talk. Neither of us had faced war before; and it was difficult to tune our thoughts to the fact that the broad sweep of Europe from Brest to Constantinople was one long bristling battlefield; and that soon we would be in the thick of it, patching torn bodies rent by the teeth of war, pitifully doing our little best to repair what the wrath of man had done.

"It looks to me," I said, "as if we were in for a devilish thick time. The news at Athens was that the Serbs were being driven back, and the Austrians would be in Nish before we got there."

Barclay flicked the end from his cigarette.

"I think McLaren, our 'Chief,' hasn't quite grasped it," he said. "He talks of what we will do, and what we won't do at Nish, as if we were likely to be able to choose. It seems to me we shall be dumped right into it without choice, as soon as we get there. It must be a horrible business to be behind a beaten army, with the

wounded always being pushed back on you, and you always moving back trying to evacuate them amongst the ruck of retreating troops."

"If all's true we have been hearing, the need for us must be appalling. I expect you're right. But I've given up trying to arrange the future," I said. "Make a working plan for the comfort of your soul, but let it be elastic, is a good rule. If it won't work, when you are faced with facts, scrap it altogether, and start afresh."

"Yes," said Barclay sleepily.

In the morning we woke to a sunlit dimpling sea. We were in the Gulf of Salonika. Land lay on either side and ahead of us. To starboard were the blue hills of the Calcidice, to port the mountains of Macedonia, with the great peak of high Olympus, sacred to Zeus the Thunderer, dazzling white, immaculate, dominating all. It was not to these, however, storied though they be, that all eyes were turned, but directly ahead. Salonika was in sight, and it represented not only the end of a voyage, but also the beginning of a new life, with all the unexpected possibilities involved, awaiting us.

Seen at a distance, in the early morning light, the city appeared as an irregular quadrilateral mosaic of black and white and terra-cotta, with curious long needle-like streaks of white amid the reds and blacks. As we drew nearer the mosaic resolved itself into square white houses with red tiled roofs, bowered in gardens dark with cypresses and mulberry trees; and the curious white streaks became the slender minarets of the many domed mosques, scattered irregularly over the city, which lay four square within its battlemented encircling walls, rising from the water's edge precipitously to the Calamerian hills behind.

Gradually as we drew nearer, the masts of many feluccas, sterns close-hauled against the low stone sea-front, appeared; whilst nearer us, anchored inside the

protecting arms of the breakwater, were steamships flying the flags of every European country except Germany and Austria, an indication of the unseen power of our navy which we were quick to note.

The sea-front itself extended for over a mile from west to east, ending in a striking white battlemented round tower, which, from the nameless cruelties perpetrated within its walls in the past, bore the grim title of "The Tower of Blood." All along this front were the palatial façades of hotels, restaurants, banks and other public buildings, past which electric trams ran to and fro, producing in our minds a curious confusion of thought, such as we had already experienced when we found we could travel from the Piraeus to Athens by a similar ultra-modern method of locomotion. Somehow this made it difficult for us to realise that we were gazing on the ancient Thessalonika of the Greeks, the scene of the early missionary efforts of St Paul, the siege torn city held in turn by the Romans, Byzantines, Saracens, Normans, Venetians, captured by the Turks as long ago as 1430 A.D., and torn from their hands by the victorious Greeks, after almost five centuries of occupation, only eighteen months before our arrival.

As it happened I was orderly officer for the day, and to me fell the duty of seeing our baggage and stores safely landed. Frankly I did not relish the job. At an English port such duty would have been simplicity itself; but, with memories of the East coming back, I knew I had something in front of me which would tax my watchfulness and patience to the uttermost. For in the Levant the fable still exists that every travelling Englishman is a milord, and there is a deep-laid all-pervasive conspiracy, therefore, between dragomen, porters, boatmen, custom-house officers, hotel touts, cabmen, and all the flotsam and jetsam of a foreign port, to bleed him mercilessly of his gold, a conspiracy which it is almost impossible to circumvent. All these

bandits hover over him like vultures, fight for his body, fasten their tentacles into him at every turn, exhaust his patience, lose his baggage, and finally, when they have driven him to the verge of madness, take refuge from his just fury behind the barrier of a foreign tongue, spreading deprecating hands, shrugging shoulders, but never for a moment relaxing their steady siege on his rapidly diminishing resources.

We made fast alongside the wharf about 7 a.m.; and here one would have imagined the passengers, without further fuss, would have been allowed to land directly. But no! Salonika has a large population of longshoremen, and, to keep these comparatively appeased, passengers are compelled by port regulations to pile themselves and their belongings into rickety boats on the off-side of the ship, and thus get taken to the landing steps on the sea-front, there to wrangle over the fare as one used to do with the old London cabby.

So, in the intervals of directing our orderlies to get our baggage and stores on deck, I watched our fellow passengers, French, Greek, Belgian, Serb, Roumanian, etc., getting their personal effects away, and wondered how we were going to dispose of our mountainous impedimenta.

And then we suddenly discovered that we were really important people. The Serbian Consul, the English Vice-consul, and "Charlie" appeared—especially "Charlie." The English Vice-consul and I had been at the same public school. Faintly surprised at the unexpected meeting, we grinned at one another.

"Hullo, Bones," I said. "Hullo, Father," he answered. Then he became a government official again. What he really had come about was to meet "Our Mr Brown," standing very quietly at my elbow, very inconspicuous. I introduced them, and they disappeared together. The Serbian Consul on the other hand, knew nothing officially about this mysterious gentleman. He

was there publicly to receive us, and smooth our path as far as the frontier.

Our " Chief " was therefore soon deep in conversation with him; and it was at this moment that " Charlie " discovered me, and took possession in the way that only a ' dragoman ' can.

" Charlie " was a large, loose, bottle-nosed, polyglot, obviously Hebraic person in a uniform cap. He seemed to know and be known to everyone. He was evidently willing to do anything, or anyone, provided he was sufficiently well paid, and there was no physical risk attached. He never mentioned the word " pay " of course. That was understood as between gentlemen. He told me he had run a " Hotel " at Shepherd's Bush. If he overcharged his customers as unblushingly as he did us at Salonika, I do not wonder he had to return to the Levant. And yet in his way he served us well.

The Serbian Consul had arranged that we should be allowed to land direct on the wharf. As soon as " Charlie " grasped this, he assumed charge at once, fixed up our rooms for the night, and took all the responsibility of getting us off in the morning from the Consul's shoulders.

" You will want of your baggage, sir, what you will need to sleep. The rest—no use. It can go with the stores, soh ! and with you will arrive at Nish," he said, spreading his hands palms upwards. The " Chief," who had been having some difficulty with the Serbian Consul's French, and had called upon " Charlie " to interpret, agreed that this was a good plan. But I had not been in the Levant before without learning something. It sounded too good. I knew it was too good, and acted accordingly, detailing two orderlies to make sure that all the personal baggage of the unit was separated from the stores, holding them responsible that all kit should arrive complete at the hotel. It was lucky I did so, for, as it turned out, we heard nothing of our stores until ten days after our arrival in Serbia,

although we saw them loaded into railway trucks, complete, before we left the quay-side. The Austrians had a playful little way at that time of bribing the Greek porters to lose trucks containing presumably military stores. They managed to lose ours for almost a fortnight somewhere about Monastir.

I found the others already half way through breakfast in the big Restaurant of the Olympus Palace Hotel, when I had finished the baggage question. It was an interesting cosmopolitan crowd to watch, a crowd in which Greek officers in khaki, very gorgeous in gold epaulettes and big curving swords, predominated, for the Greek army had recently been mobilized.

Many-tongued rumour was busy. The Serbs were said to be breaking before the onslaught of the Austrian hordes. There were circumstantial reports that the Grey-coats had already got as far south as Nish, and that nothing short of marching straight on Salonika would satisfy them now. The Bulgars were reported to have concentrated 250,000 men on the frontier, ready to join up with the Austrians, determined to wrest Macedonia from the Greeks and Serbs, by whose combined "perfidy" they had been deprived of it barely two years before. The air was electric; and we felt, after the quiet of the sea, as though we had been plunged suddenly into a maelstrom. Editions of the local papers were coming out every hour; and small boys circled round the tables in the restaurant selling them. There were papers in Greek, French, German, Turkish, Judo-Spanish and Italian, indicating the extraordinary cosmopolitan nature of the population. We ourselves were hungry for news, and fell eagerly on such as we could read. We had learnt almost nothing at Malta, the censorship there was so severe; and the English papers at Athens were already ten days old. Anything might have happened in the meantime.

Jefferson, our Australian educated in the United

States, who was the most junior member of the Unit, had been looking round for later English news, and finding none.

By now everyone had come to know him as " Steve "; and " Steve " he remained until the end. He was a constant joy to us, with his mixture of restless energy, American slang, careless generosity, flashes of shrewdness, general youthfulness, and occasional sound common sense.

He had the natural assurance of the Australian aggravated by an American education, and, without any suspicion of the absurdity of his attitude, was accustomed to lecture us daily on the war—how it should be run, how badly it was being run, how much better he could do it if he were in control.

It was a priceless performance, and I, for one, would not have missed it for anything. But in spite of this, he really was quite a competent doctor, rather apt to rush to a diagnosis on insufficient grounds like most young doctors, but with the makings of a first-class clinician in him.

Already we were very fond of Steve.

Just before I arrived to breakfast he had managed to get hold of a French journal. It was called *Le Nouveau Siècle*, and his face grew longer and longer as he read.

" Say, Father. We're in a bad way," he exclaimed when I came in. " Listen to this," and he read out a long message about great German victories on the Marne. Barclay by then had got another paper. It was called *L'Opinion*, and presented the cause of the Allies in the most roseate way. According to it the Germans were at the last gasp, the Austrians suing for peace, the Russians triumphant everywhere. Sherlock, the stolid little man from Manchester, meanwhile had ferretted out yet another journal, *L'Independent*. It too, was optimistic on our side, but not quite so roseate as *L'Opinion*. Accordingly we began to compare notes.

"I've got a hunch," said Steve, "that one of these editors is some liar."

"It all depends on one's point of view which is the liar," said Barclay, sagely.

Afterwards, of course, we discovered that all three papers were subsidised to present news favourable to one or other side, and that Austria in particular was spending money like water to influence Greek opinion against intervention on the side of the Allies, knowing that if her cause succeeded all the Balkan States must fall automatically under her suzerainty.

Before our arrival in Serbia two attempts at invasion by Austria had failed, one in August, one in September. The third was now in progress, and as it seemed, on the crest of success.

After breakfast, knowing we could not leave for the frontier before the following day, we started to scour the town. The first place we sought naturally was the Post Office, in order to get rid of the mail accumulated since we left Malta. All along the front, in the streets, the trams, the cafés, the place was swarming with Greek soldiers dressed in khaki. In the Post Office we found half a dozen of them, and when I was enquiring in halting French about the postal rates to England, one of them turned suddenly on me.

"Say. Mister. Are you British?" he said in a pronounced American accent; and we all became friends at once.

He was a reservist from Pittsburg, recalled to the colours; and there were hundreds like him, he informed us, in Salonika. Indeed we could not help seeing it was so, for they stopped us constantly in the most friendly manner in the street, insisting on conversing with us, sometimes possibly to air their English before their less travelled comrades, but always with a genuine friendly feeling which there was no mistaking. Whatever was the feeling of their officers, and we had a sensation it was none too kindly at times, there was no doubt as to that

Plate I.—Greek soldier. Greek Albanian soldier.
Salonika.

of the men. They were quite sure that they would be at war within a fortnight on the side of the Allies, and the relish with which they talked of cutting up the Bulgars, showed that they, at any rate, had a very definite idea whom the enemy would be. That, you will remember, was in the end of October 1914.

Salonika, like every other ancient city, still flourishing, is a palimpsest of history. Situated on the broad alluvial plain, formed by the junction of the Vardar and the Inji Karasu, spreading up to the hills on the north between its crumbling walls, from the Tower of Blood on the sea-front to the Castle of the Seven Towers (Heptapyrgion), it presents a moving picture in which the Eastern note is ever dominant, in spite of the modernity of electric cars on the front, and elaborately stuccoed white villas along the sea-shore beyond the walls to the east. This note is partly due to the constant panorama presented by the kaleidoscopic passers-by — portly fezzed Turks, white capped Albanians, Cretans with enormously baggy trousers, tall, white-kilted Greek mountaineers with whiskered shoes, solemn Greek priests all in black, patriarchal Jewish Rabbis, dark skinned piratical-looking sailors, gold earringed, with gaudy handkerchiefs tied round their heads, arriving from the neighbouring Ægean islands with their cargoes of fish, mussels, squids, sponges, which they were unloading from the feluccas along the sea-front—but it is chiefly, I think, caused by the fact, that no matter where you wander you constantly come across some great-domed mosque, with its soul uplifting minaret, a slender white finger pointing towards high heaven, the one great contribution Mohammedan architecture has given to the æsthetic pleasure of the world.

Steve, Sherlock and I wandered round on foot, freed from further responsibility for the day. A military band was playing in the square just beyond our hotel,

and the little marble tables of the Odeon and other cafés around were fully occupied. We followed the street leading out of the square at right angles to the sea-front, as most of the European shops were there, and it would be our last opportunity of acquiring various things we needed before we left. Sherlock dubbed it "Oxford Street" at once; and ever after we used the name when talking of it. Presently we found it narrowed, then was roofed over, and we were now in the dim-lit centre of the bazaar, whose streets, teeming with ant-like life, opened out on either side, completely oriental in their careless irregularity of outline, narrow width, and heterogeneous, multi-coloured contents.

Wandering round, turning at a right angle, we presently found ourselves in a wider street with tram lines. Compared with those we had just been through, it seemed modern, tame; and then, suddenly we came upon a crumbling, weather-beaten arch stretching over it, supported on square columns, carved in three tiers of worn old bas-reliefs in marble, representing Roman legionaries marching in triumph. It was as if the finger of time had set the clock violently back for centuries. We all stared at it solemnly.

A little Greek clerk who was passing turned his head.

"*C'est l'Arc de Triomphe d'Alexandre le grand,*" he said politely.

Steve drew a long breath. Coming from a country with no history, and no monuments, he was staggered.

"Gee," he said. "This is some Arch. Why it's B.C.! Great snakes, to think of it."

And then it dawned on me. The commonplace modern street in which we were walking with its commonplace tram-lines, and tumble-down mean houses, was the "VIA EGNATIA," the great Roman road running from Constantinople across Macedonia to the Adriatic, built to connect the two great capitals of the Empire; and the arch we were looking at was the

Arch of Constantine over the Calamerian Gate. Under it, grim Roman centurians had led their legionaries out to battle against the barbarian hordes. It had seen the gorgeous processions of Byzantine emperors. Fierce hook-nosed Saracens had stormed through it, scimitar in hand, in triumph. It had looked down upon the armed hosts of the Crusaders. The Norman knights of Boniface, Marquis of Montferret, King of Thessalonika, had kept watch and ward within its portals. Captains of the great Republic of Venice, panoplied in armour, had defended it against the onslaughts of the dread Osmanli. Finally the Crescent had triumphed over the Cross; and then, for over five hundred years, it had slumbered peacefully under the shadow of the Padishah. For five hundred years it had heard the silver call of the muezzin from the corbelled gallery of the minaret adjoining:

"God is great. I bear witness that there is no God but God. I bear witness that Mohammed is the Prophet of God. Come to prayers. Come to salvation. God is great. There is no God but God."

The call had been repeated so many thousand times that the memory of other things had become as it were the shadow of a dream. Constant reiteration had blotted out all memory of the pale-faced Nazarene. It seemed as though its sleep was destined to last for ever.

And then had come the change, sudden, sharp, dramatic, heralded by the rapid staccato of the machine gun. A miracle had happened. The immemorial Turk had vanished like a vision in the night. His reign was over. The voice of the muezzin had ceased to call the faithful to prayer. The Cross was once again in the ascendant. The Crescent was no more. The conflict had been so recent that the scars were still fresh when we came upon the scene. Through the adjoining streets the struggle had lasted for forty-eight

hours; and here and there the stuccoed fronts of the houses were still pitted by the bullet holes no one had yet had time to plaster over.

* * * * * * * *

Most of the mosques had now been closed. Such as were churches before the time of the Moslem, notably St. Sophia, and St. Demetrius, had been reconsecrated to their original use. St. Sophia was built in the time of Justinian. It became a mosque in 1589, and was reconsecrated again in 1913. Thus we were able to see the curious sight of a minaret standing alongside the great central dome, from whose apex a cross once more shone golden against the blue.

It was the church of St. Demetrius, patron saint of Salonika, however, which we found the most interesting. It too had been a mosque for centuries; but the Turks had been so casual in its conversion that they had merely white-washed over the wonderful Byzantine mosaics of the Saviour in gold and green and blue, with which the interior is decorated; and now these had once more been given to the light of day. They also had respected the tomb of the saint, and his reputed miracle-working body in its stone sarcophagus, although there is a legend that this was hacked to pieces by order of the Sultan Armurath II. when Salonika was sacked in 1430.

The body of the saint is said to exude a miraculous oil, hence his title of "Myroblete"; and this oil is reputed to cure almost every affliction that flesh is heir to. Pilgrims therefore seeking relief have flocked to the tomb, and prayed before it for centuries—for the Moslem, in spite of his reputation to the contrary, has always been extremely tolerant of Christian mythology; and so, during all the centuries the church was a mosque, Christians were allowed freely to visit the sacred site. The tomb was always carefully looked after by a dervish of the Mevlevi order, the holy lamp

kept lit, and apparently the dervish in charge seems to have had as great faith in the efficacy of the saint's body as the Christian worshippers who came there.

The tomb itself is in a little dark side chapel to the left of the entrance; and when we visited it we found it again in the care of a Greek monk, the gentle dervish keepers having been displaced. Devotees, mostly women in black, came in quietly as we watched, bought a taper from the monk, lit it, stuck it in a niche, murmured their prayers softly, and then as quietly made their exit. No one spoke until we were outside. "Guess you'd see nothing like this in little old New York," said Steve, impressed and not wishing to appear so, conscious of a sense of something missed, and not quite able to express it.

Wandering round through devious, narrow, precipitous streets, with overhanging balconies, and secret looking latticed windows, past stoutly barred doorways, suggestive of stealthy intrigue, dodging heavily laden porters, and panniered donkeys in the narrow alleyways, half turning to look at veiled women, clearing to one side in the wider streets when persistent cries of "*oz, oz, oz*" told us that a fiacre, recklessly driven by some turbaned jehu, was getting perilously close to our heels, we gradually worked towards the lower levels of the city again. Then we missed Sherlock.

Turning round to look for him, I saw him disappear up an alley, past a gipsy-like woman, who was drawing water from a tap into a big red amphora, outside the broken-down wall of an old mosque. A stream of picturesquely ragged women and children swirled backwards and forwards past her, in and out of the mosque; and presently, her amphora filled, she swung it on to her head, and arm poised, joined the entering throng behind Sherlock. Following her, coming from the bright sunlight into the gloom of the interior, I thought at first we had got into a market place, for the whole of the ground space was occupied by little heaps of piled-up

household goods, vegetables and pottery, amongst and around which groups of peasants were squatting, amid pots and pans, cradles, clothes, stools, curtains, brass ornaments, stoves and all the paraphernalia of a marine store. Everywhere, children were swarming; and the smell of cooking was all pervasive. Presently we discovered what it meant. These people were refugee Greeks, mainly from Smyrna and Asia Minor, fleeing before the anger of the Turk. They were being fed by the Greek government, and housed, in a sort of "punishment-fit-the-crime" manner, exclusively in mosques commandeered from the Salonika Moslems. We tried to photograph the scene, but the semi-darkness made anything like a snap-shot impossible, and the constant movement of the children a time exposure futile.

Life has a way of being very inartistic. There is no gradation about her. She has a habit of violent antitheses. When we got back to the hotel we were just in time for the great social function of the day—five o'clock tea to the strains of an orchestra in the winter garden of the Olympus. It was impossible not to contrast it with the scene we had just witnessed. Instead of squalor, gloom, rags, overcrowding and the close heavy atmosphere of mixed greasy cooking, we came upon light and laughter, the *fru-fru* of silk, the gold and silver, blue and red of uniforms, the sound of gay voices, tea-cups, clinking spurs, tapping sabres, interweaving with the soft strains of the orchestra hidden behind a mass of evergreens. Deft waiters in black crossed and recrossed the view, carrying brightly polished trays laden with silver, china and patisserie. There was much stately bowing and kissing of ladies' hands, sidelong glances under heavy lashes, gesticulation, laughter and more laughter. It might have been a scene in the Ring-strasse at Vienna, instead of in this time-worn old city.

Knocking round the world has deprived me largely of the sense of surprise; so when the man from the Adelphi Club looked up from his corner in the cafè, met my eye, nodded, and said:

"How d'ye do," quite casually, I answered, just as casually:

"Fairish, thank you, fairish," and sat down beside him, after ordering tea. Neither of us troubled to ask the other's business. For the moment I could not remember his name. I am quite sure he did not know mine. For in the Adelphi Club names are of no importance. Men come, talk, are seen every day for weeks, and then disappear, to return three, six, twelve months later. No one asks whence they come, and whither they go. It is enough if their conversation be interesting. Swaine and I had met thus at irregular intervals for years. I knew he must be a writer, probably a war or foreign correspondent. He knew I belonged to one of the scientific professions—probably medicine. Naturally I asked him to come and dine with us that evening.

We were supposed to be starting for Nish early next morning; but, when the Serbian Consul came in after dinner, we learned we were to be stopped at Uskub (Skoplje). The Consul explained elaborately that the Paget Unit had been placed there three days previously, and it was thought the other English unit should be in the same place. Our Chief was very much disturbed by this.

"But can you assure me there will be enough surgical scope for two units there?" he said, anxiously.

The Consul threw up his hands dramatically.

"Work! You desire work, *n'est pas?* There will be work, too much. The Serbian doctors they are too few. Our good friends the Russians they cannot spare us enough. Work, *Monsieur le docteur,* at Skoplje!" He shrugged his shoulders mournfully. "There is work everywhere in Serbie."

The war correspondent murmured quietly to me :—

"Poor beggar, he doesn't say so, but it is probable you couldn't get to Nish if you wanted to. The news to-night is very bad. Retirement after retirement. The Serbs have evacuated Kraguievatz, their only arsenal, to-day; and the Austrians are said to be within seventy kilometres of Nish, straddled across the railway at Stallash. There's talk already of moving the government down to Skoplje; so, *if* you get there, you'll be in the thick of it."

"If we get there?" I queried.

"Yes. If you get there. A nice, harmless old gentleman, with a German accent, probably an Austrian spy, confided in me this afternoon that the Bulgars were going to cut the line to-night to isolate the Serbs from Salonika. Of course it's only a boast of his. If he really knew he wouldn't tell me. But it seems that the Serbs are very short of ammunition, and that the French are sending it in quantities from here. If the Bulgars can manage to cut the line, it won't get through; and then 'Good-bye Serbie.'"

"But the Bulgars are not at war with the Serbs," I protested.

He smiled. "There's always war in Macedonia. Not officially, of course. Ever heard of the Komitadgi? No. Well, you'll know all about them soon. Good-bye. Good luck to you!"

CHAPTER II

SKOPLJE

Leaving for Serbia—Uskub and how we were stopped there—Introducing Ike, the Austrian nunnery, Franz and the ' Sestras '—Serbian mud and the magnificent Albanian—The bridge of Stefan the Strangler—In the Turkish quarter—How the wounded came—A momentous decision.

IT was a beautiful Sunday morning late in November when we said good-bye to Salonika. We breakfasted at six, collected and sent our kit ahead with the orderlies and " Charlie," paid the extortionate bill presented blandly by the Austrian proprietor, bent on spoiling the Egyptians.

Strolling on later in the fresh morning air to the station, Steve and I stopped once or twice to take photographs, and thus presently found ourselves outdistanced by the other officers. Eventually arriving at what we thought was the station, we saw five of our orderlies calmly seated in a carriage, happy and content; but there was no sign of the rest of the company, nor of the baggage.

" I guess we've struck the wrong depôt," said Steve.

" Say. Where does this train go to?" he called out to a porter. The man shook his head sorrowfully. Then a Greek soldier standing by turned to us grinning. " Where you want to go, mister? Chicago, or San Francisco?"

Steve smiled back at him.

" Sonny, I hate to tell you. But it's somewhere in Serbia," he confided.

" Then you better get busy, pretty quick, or you miss." He pointed to the left, half a mile ahead.

"That your depôt, Mister Doctor," he said, and we stopped smiling.

Bundling out our men, we doubled for the other station, arriving just in time.

The journey over the plain of Macedonia was monotonously slow. The country on either side was one broad rolling vista, devoid of cultivation. Occasionally a shepherd in his long cloak, crook in hand, with his little flock of sheep following, would be seen. Occasionally we passed a solitary peasant crouched on his patient ass, ambling slowly along the ancient road from Salonika into the interior. Every now and then we stopped at some deserted little wayside station, always with its guard of khaki-clad Greek soldiers with fixed bayonets.

Far away to the west were the snow-clad ranges of Thessaly, with Olympus still in view. Directly north, ever on the edge of the horizon, were the mountains of Serbia, glittering crystalline white; and always as the hours passed we seemed to be just as far away from them as when we started.

At length came an interruption. We had reached the frontier station at Ghevgeli, and were at last on Serbian soil, the khaki-clad Greek soldier now being replaced by the blue-grey Serb, of whom we were soon to have so intimate a knowledge. We changed over into a new set of carriages provided by the Serbian government, and found we had once again become personages. Serbian officials, very trim and smart, in peaked caps decorated with the old Byzantine double eagle, long grey overcoats, clanking swords, and high top-boots took possession of us, talking in rapid French.

After an interval our new train started, and we found that the character of the scenery gradually changed. The line of the railway now followed closely the coils of the Vardar, the great river which winds from the mountains of Serbia downwards to the Ægean at Salonika. High hills, covered with scrub, now shut us

in on either side, coming close at places, receding for several miles at others, once narrowing down to a rocky defile, leaving room only for the river and the railway. Occasionally, where the valley widened, we saw great orchards of apple, plum and cherry trees, for we were now in a latitude too high for the dark olive groves so characteristic of Greece. Occasionally we crossed the Vardar on a bridge, and here the train always slowed down to a crawl.

This, we found, was because nearly all the bridges had been blown up during various raids, Serb, Bulgar, Turk, within the last three years; and they had never been properly repaired in the intervals, wooden buttresses, and iron girders taking the place of stone. All along the line, at frequent intervals, were Serbian guards, who came smartly to attention as the train passed. They were mostly elderly-looking men, clad in rough, peasant homespun, shod in sandals, with monk-like hoods over their heads; but their rifles seemed serviceable, their bandoliers full, their sidearms bright, and they looked, what they were, efficient soldiers. Their guard houses would have shocked the British military eye. Many were mere shelters of osiers plastered with mud, large enough to accommodate one man only. Others, however, were half cave, half mud-hut, capable of holding some four or five men comfortably, each with its little tin chimney, projecting through the roof of sods, to carry away the blue smoke of the wood stove lit for comfort and cooking purposes inside. Altogether the line from the frontier was patrolled with a care which seemed to us excessive at the time, not knowing, as we did later, the constant risk from bands of Bulgarian bandits (Komitadgi) always on the lookout for the chance of a successful night raid from the hills across the frontier only a few hours' march away.

Slowly the train clanked onwards. We smoked, and talked, and ate our rations, watching the afternoon wear towards evening, the shadows lengthen, the landscape

become less and less distinct. And then quite suddenly came the dark. It was then also we discovered there were no lights in the carriages, and found out why there were so many spots of candle grease on the window-ledges and the seats. The lighting arrangements had been put permanently out of gear at the beginning of the war, to prevent sniping; but the intelligent passenger, ignoring the risk, had retorted by buying candles and sticking them down anywhere on the ledges of the uncurtained windows.

Not knowing these little idiosyncrasies we were taken unawares; and thus were plunged into complete darkness at nightfall. The train jogged slowly onwards. We had been by now some twelve hours on the journey, and were getting rather cramped, and somewhat ragged tempered.

It was at this inopportune period that the Chief suddenly spoke in the darkness.

"I've been thinking it over, and cannot see why we should stop at Uskub. We've got our orders from London to report at Nish. I propose we go on, and take no notice of the Consul's message."

Frankly the prospect appalled us. The idea of spending another twelve hours, cramped, six men and baggage, in a carriage where we could not even see one another, was exceedingly uninviting. None of us were accustomed at that time to the inconveniences of military travelling. The next four years were to give most of us ample opportunities of realising that what we thought then uncomfortable was the height of luxury. At that time only the Chief knew, and naturally we expostulated. It was pointed out that orders issued in London could not possibly be treated as overriding those necessitated by subsequent military conditions. We reminded him, that, though the officials at the frontier were elaborately certain that communications with Nish still were undisturbed, there was more of hope than faith in their assertions. While we were arguing the

point, the lights of a large town loomed up in the distance.

" Uskub ! " said everyone.

We arrived in a dark station about the time we were due at Uskub. Swarms of people tried to get into the train, already overcrowded, tried to invade our carriage. There was no one apparently in control to whom we could refer. Presently a boy came along selling candles. Sherlock seized a packet eagerly, and asked where we were. The boy could not understand. He stared at the strange uniform, and seemed afraid we did not intend to pay for the candles. Eventually we found we were at Veles (Kopreli), and had still another two hours before we came to Uskub (Skoplje).

The candle light made us all more cheerful. By tacit consent the question of going on to Nish was dropped. We had decided to wait until we arrived at Uskub. Apparently the light made time move more quickly, for we were almost surprised when eventually we arrived at another large town. It really was Uskub (Skoplje) this time. The station was very crowded. We saw a number of Serbian officers on the platform. Our men began to put their heads out.

The Chief and I got out, and threaded our way towards the officers. A Serbian Major caught sight of us, came over, saluted punctiliously and explained in French that he was there to meet us. Then he brought a Colonel, and they both talked to us at once.

The Colonel's French was atrocious. He kept saying :—

" *Restez ici, Restez ici,*" very excitedly.

The Chief was very troubled. " I wonder if they really have any power to stop us," he said. " They seem so positive— "

It was at this moment that " Ike " arrived. " Ike " was a tall, thin person, in a black tail coat with yellow buttons, and a grey Serbian soldier's cap. He spoke with a fluent American accent, explaining that he was

the official interpreter attached to us, that positive orders had come from Nish to detain us, that the excitable Colonel was the P.M.O. of Southern Serbia, and the Major the Commandant of the Hospital to which we were going to be attached. He added that our quarters were all prepared for us, and everything ready, including a hot supper.

I think that finished us. The idea of a hot supper after fifteen hours of tinned food. Even the Chief was convinced.

"Get the men out. Detail six to collect the baggage. Order the rest to form up before the station exit," he said.

Our quarters were not three minutes' from the station; and we marched there accompanied by the Colonel and Major, passing through the crowd of peasants, soldiers, Albanians, Turks, who were seething outside the station barrier staring curiously at us.

The quarters proved much better than we had anticipated. Up to the time of the war they had been an Austrian nunnery; but the nuns, gentle, harmless women, had been dispossessed some two months previously, the building was empty, and it seemed the most suitable place they could give us.

In half an hour we had selected our rooms, dumped our kit, fixed up the Officers' and Men's mess, and were ready for supper, very tired, and very happy to be at our destination after three weeks of variegated travelling.

It was a curious meal. In front of each of us on the bare table three enamelled soup plates, one on the top of the other, a knife, and a tin spoon were placed. As we finished a course the plate was removed, and we started with the same knife and spoon on the plate below. Two young girls, with white handkerchiefs decorated with red crosses tied over their hair, waited on us, watched over by the ubiquitous "Ike." These, we found, were voluntary workers detailed to look after

us until we found servants. We started with a thick hot soup with fragments of meat in it. This was followed by fried slices of very tough buffalo beef and potatoes. We had rye bread and rough red wine.

Finally came Russian tea with lemon and sugar in glasses; and Ike produced in addition a bottle labelled "Koniak," a raw native brandy that proved too much even for Stretton, the only one bold enough to experiment. It was a joyous meal. We laughed, made little speeches in reply to those of the Serbian officers, thawed completely.

Eventually our kind hosts left us, clanking off in stiff military fashion; and presently we all gravitated to our contiguous rooms for a conversational smoke, sitting in our camp chairs in the ease of unbuttoned tunics, before turning in for the night.

The nunnery was a comfortable, one-storied, yellow plastered building with a courtyard in front, surrounded by high walls having a grilled gate opening on the main street. There were two wings behind, which had been used as the wards of a small maternity hospital, and made excellent dormitories for our men. There was also a little chapel, now sealed up by the Serbian Government, a yard with a pump, a kitchen garden, and a big neglected rose garden. In peace time it must have been a sunny, happy little place. As it was, until our trouble came we looked upon it affectionately as "home." It was stoutly built, with double windows, cool in summer, warm in winter.

Anticipating the cold of Serbia, we had brought heavy sleeping bags with us. Out of doors it certainly was cold; but in our quarters we found it stiflingly hot, for the double windows had all been hermetically sealed for the winter, and in each room the central stove, with its sheet-iron chimney pipe, was kept almost red hot by the energetic stoking of Franz, our Austrian orderly, whose main idea in life apparently was to keep on adding logs of wood to each stove on the slightest provocation.

Franz was a puzzle to us at first. His open smiling blue eyes and flaxen hair could easily have been duplicated in any Sussex village. He was obviously not a Serb; and yet he was dressed in Serbian uniform, grey tunic and trousers, cap and sandals complete. He talked Serbian fluently; but his knowledge of German was rudimentary in the extreme. Eventually we found out he was a Czech, who had fought for the Serbs in the first Balkan war, and had refused to return to his country when war broke out between Austria and the Serbs. As he was, however, naturally unwilling to fight against his own countrymen, he had been employed as a hospital orderly until we arrived. When he came to us he could not speak a word of English, and we had to indicate by signs what we wanted; but he was abnormally intelligent, picked up English very rapidly, and we turned him into a first-class valet in a week. At night he slept on a narrow wooden form outside my door, with his ration of rye bread in a haversack over his head. It looked horribly uncomfortable; but he seemed to thrive and be happy on it. Every morning at five-thirty he was up and about, making fires, cleaning top-boots, belts, buttons, bringing hot water for the baths, making himself generally indispensable.

On the night of our arrival we astonished him by carefully unscrewing and opening every window before turning in for the night. He was obviously amazed at the foolishness of it. Clearly he could not understand. But he was good-naturedly polite about it. After all it was our affair, and if we were frozen—. As a matter of fact the extreme cold woke me up about four in the morning. The stove had long gone out, and I was chilled in spite of my heavy sleeping bag.

The two young girls, "Sestras," voluntary workers who looked after our household for the first few days, we found some difficulty in placing. Apparently they were not servants, nor were they nurses. They made friends rapidly with our orderlies by the universal

language of signs, smiles, and eyebrows, but seemed rather in awe of the surgeons. One of them, who came from Belgrade spoke German fluently, and said her brother was an officer. It was all rather puzzling to us at first, until we found that there were practically no class distinctions in the country. The people are a race of yeomen farmers. There is no landed gentry, no hereditary titled class. The General may have a brother fighting in the ranks. The father of the Prime Minister, the Prime Minister himself, may be a peasant. The Ambassador to a foreign court may have a brother a small shopkeeper. Possibly this freedom from class distinctions may be due to long association with the Turks, amongst whom hereditary rank is practically unknown. More probably, however, it has come about owing to the repression of centuries making it impossible for any Christian aristocratic class to maintain itself. Whatever may be the explanation, the fact remains that Serbia is a democratic country in every sense of the term.

Where these " sestras " slept did not occur to us as a problem—we were not yet aware of the tremendous congestion due to the presence of thousands of refugees in the town—till one night on going late into the mess room I found them sleeping wrapped up in rugs on the floor, with Ike and another Serb whom we came afterwards to call the " White Rabbit " also asleep in the far corner. This distressed us very much, but apparently had not discomposed them in the least. They did not seem to mind, and as they left us the next day we had not to trouble further. It was the same everywhere we found. People slept where they could, not where they wanted to; and these girls were refugees, glad to sleep anywhere where it was warm, like many thousands of others equally gently born. But to return. Last and most important in our entourage was " Ike," our dragoman and general factotum for months. None of us, I think, ever liked him. None of us trusted him.

Steve, to my mind, summed him up concisely when he remarked:

"Say, Father. That's a mighty foxy duck. Guess he's a bad actor."

He certainly was a foxy duck. The term fitted him like a glove, for with his dark oval cunning face under a grey Serbian cap, his black cut-away coat encasing a lithe sinuous body, his long thin legs swathed in grey puttees, he looked for all the world like some composite predatory animal. By nationality he was a Hungarian. He had been for years in the United States. Before the war he had acted in some capacity for an English railway contracting company in Belgrade. Although he had married a Serbian wife and said he was an American citizen, as soon as war broke out he was interned. How he got released was not quite clear, for he was still suspected to be an Austrian spy, and was sent down to Southern Serbia to be out of the way. He was, however, a good business man, could speak English, and it was thought that if he were working for us he would be usefully employed, and at the same time could be watched more easily. So he became our dragoman.

On the day after our arrival, while our Chief, aided by the British Consul, was having solemn talks with the authorities over our future activities, we took the opportunity of wandering through the picturesque old city, which we were now told should be called Skoplje and not Uskub. Nearly every town of any size in the Balkans, we found, had from two to five names, and it was not for some time after our arrival that we came to understand the hidden meaning of this multiplicity. For the choice of name for any place in certain areas indicates at once the political views and nationality of the person using it. For instance the capital of Turkey in Europe to the Mussulman is Istamboul, to the Christian of the Balkans it is Tzarégrad (the city of Cæsar), to the Greek and people of the west, Constantinople. Similarly, what is Monastir to the Turk is

Bitolia to the Serb, and something else to the Bulgar. Our present habitat we came to call Skoplje or Uskub indifferently, although we knew that Skoplje was the ancient historical name of the city of Stefan the Strangler, and Uskub merely a Turkish corruption of the sound of it.

Its position is picturesque in the extreme, lying as it does on the banks of the Vardar, with great snow-clad hills surrounding it to the north, and west and east. All this we saw in panorama later, for on this, our first morning, we were occupied only with the immediate surroundings. It had been raining heavily in the night, as Steve and I discovered when we prepared to venture forth; and Franz, anticipating things, had put out our rubber top boots suggestively handy. The courtyard in front of our quarters, from which many pariah dogs and two pigs fled on our approach, had a paved path down the centre to the heavy open gate, and this was comparatively clean. But once outside we came upon a quagmire.

Steve looked down on his beautiful, shining top-boots regretfully.

"Say, Father," he said. "The guy that told us to bring these 'gums' with us knew something." and I agreed heartily, seeing in a flash why in pictures the upper classes in Russia and the Balkans are always represented as living and moving in top-boots. It is not possible otherwise to get about in comfort. For the mud of the country in winter is something indescribable to anyone accustomed to our much scavengered England. It is everywhere, thick, black, tenacious. Peasants on donkeys, peasants on shaggy hill ponies, splash through it regardless of passers-by. Drivers of ox-waggons trudge stolidly through it in sandals, oblivious of discomfort. Everyone is Serbia is used to it, knows no better. Even we in our turn, in the months that followed, grew gradually accustomed, and finally only passively conscious of it.

The main streets of the city were supposed to be paved with round cobble stones; but immemorial ruts, never mended, made driving in the broken-down fiacres that plied for hire a gymnastic exercise suitable only to the most robust constitution; and it was some weeks before we attempted any such adventure.

On this morning Steve and I wandered aimlessly wherever our fancy led us. There was a footpath in the first street we came to, but it was so rocky we soon took to the middle of the road, and then we noticed that all the inhabitants did likewise. In the Near East no habitué ever walks on a footpath. The middle of the road is good enough for him. When a fiacre comes thundering behind him with the driver shouting "*Oz, oz, oz,*" in reduplicated warning, he looks casually round, steps to one side and lets it pass. It is all beautifully simple. It is also effective, for the curious thing is no one ever seems to get run over.

As we sauntered onwards people stared curiously at our uniform, wondering what we were. Once or twice we caught the word "Rusi" (Russians). It was a frequent mistake until they got to know us. We, on the other hand, stared equally frankly at everyone we met, for Uskub is a curiously cosmopolitan place. Essentially it is still a Turkish town, the Serbian leaven not being then more than three years old; and, as in most Turkish towns, the various nationalities could readily be distinguished from one another by their dress, the differences in which lend an air of brightness very marked to the Western eye.

"Look at that queer guy!" said Steve, inclining his head towards a man approaching us behind a waggon loaded with sawn wood, which creaked lumberingly past us, drawn by four huge oxen with enormous fierce-looking horns. He was a magnificent specimen, tall, swarthy, with a round white felt skull-cap, a much-embroidered padded zouave jacket over a blue shirt, and white woollen trousers close fitting from the knee

downwards. These trousers were adorned with black braid along the sides, and had wide openings showing the shirt where the pockets should have been. His feet were encased in thonged leather sandals over thick brightly embroidered socks, which came half way up the leg, over the trousers. He was smoking a cigarette in a holder, but the holder was over two feet long, had a stem adorned with silver inlay, and a mouth piece, apparently of amber, which was as large as a hen's egg, and more than half filled his month. He passed us with a lordly air of unconcern. Afterwards we came to know the type well. He was a prosperous Albanian in full rig.

The Albanian costume is so characteristic that these people seem very much in evidence wherever they are found. The white skull-cap and braided trousers are the essentials. Other garments may vary. The enormous white kilt, white stockings, and black whiskered shoes, worn by Southern Albanians, are not found in Macedonia outside Salonika ; and indeed when one comes across them, even there, the owner is probably a " Kavasse " from one of the Consulates, or a soldier belonging to one of the Greek Albanian regiments—a condition of affairs not unlike that which obtains with regard to the kilt in Scotland. In Uskub we never saw any of these kilted gentry, although the other variety was everywhere. They seemed to run nearly all the vegetable and fruit stalls, most of the itinerant sweetmeat business, practically all the farrier work, and apparently divided the job of porter with low-class Turks and Tziganes.

Steve and I wandered round, absorbing impressions. One thing struck us again and again : the apparently unlimited number of shaving saloons and small cafès. The barbers' sign in the Near East is the shaving basin. It hangs over every saloon door, and is usually a copper or brass dish with a crescent cut out of one side, into which the neck of the customer is supposed to fit. Many

of the barbers also seemed to carry on their old traditional trade of teeth extraction. One gifted individual had indeed designed and executed a signboard with his name and occupation limned entirely in extracted molars, a silent but eloquent testimony to his skill which must have appealed powerfully to the hesitating customer. It was, as Steve remarked, "Some sign."

Presently, in the course of our wanderings, we came upon the river. It was our old friend the Vardar, the great river of Macedonia, which, rising in the watershed between Skoplje and Nish, runs south to Salonika and the Ægean Sea.

At Uskub it divides the city into two parts, that to the west, the new Christian part, a mushroom growth due largely to the railway, and that to the east, the old part still mainly Turkish, and therefore more interesting. At the point where we came upon it, the Vardar is about as wide as the Thames at Richmond; and here it is crossed by a very beautiful grey stone bridge of eight arches sloping gracefully towards either end. The Serbs call it the bridge of Tzar Dushan, in memory of their great king Stefan the Strangler, who, after defeating the Hungarians, Bulgars, and even threatening the sacred city of the Paleologi itself, united under his sway all Bosnia, Serbia, Macedonia and Albania.

It was in the fortress of Uskub, which is so prominent an object from the bridge we have been describing, that he had himself crowned Emperor of the Serbians. He is the great outstanding figure in Serbian history in the middle ages; and it is little wonder, therefore, that when the Serbians captured Uskub after the battle of Kumanovo, they called the bridge after his name.

All this is very ancient history, for Dushan died at Deabolis in Albania in 1356 A.D. But ancient history has sometimes a way of becoming suddenly important modern history; and this is a case in point. The fame of Stefan Dushan has been kept green in the memory of

the Serbian peasant by legendary tales, told by the wood fire in the winter, and by heroic songs and poems recited and sung by itinerant bards at fairs and festivals in the summer, throughout all the long centuries during which the people have groaned under the Turkish yoke; and thus Stefan is as real a figure to-day to the Serbs as the late King Peter.

The bridge Steve and I crossed that afternoon, may or may not have been built by Stefan—probably not; but the Serbs never forgot that he had been crowned in the Citadel above, and always looked upon Northern Macedonia, in consequence, as part of ancient Serbia, to be redeemed, when opportunity arose again, from the hated Turk. The opportunity came in 1912 when, utterly routed at Kumanovo thirty miles away, the Turks poured panic stricken through Uskub, abandoning this, the only strategic point between them and Salonika, without a blow.

This is what we heard from the Serbs. But there is another side, another claimant—the Bulgar. He too has ancient memories of kings in Uskub, more ancient still than the Serb. And he maintains stoutly that the population there is Bulgar to this day. In the time of the Turk, both nations carried on a fierce propaganda. There was a Serbian Bishop of the Orthodox Church. There was also a Bulgarian Bishop of the Exarch Church. Both nations maintained schools for the children of their adherents; and so the fight went on. The bridge of Tzar Dushan may therefore be looked upon as typifying the real trouble of the Balkans, the question of Serb versus Bulgar, the overlapping aspirations of two intensely patriotic people.

At the time we were there the Serb was in the ascendant. After we left the Bulgar came into possession. Then the fortune of war once more went against him, and now Uskub is Serbian again.

When we first saw it, however, on that pleasant November morning it was just a bridge to us, a

picturesque old grey bridge which lay below and to the right of the Citadel—a huge imposing old fortress on the other side of the river, with yellow-white battlemented walls high up in the sunlight, against a sky of ultramarine as one gazed upwards.

The bridge was the common meeting place of all the heterogeneous races which made up the population of the place. Turks, Albanians, Serbs, Bulgars, Tziganes, Jews, Vlachs and Greeks passed and repassed, in an endless kaleidoscope which looked tricked out for effect to us, yet had the mental charm of being absolutely commonplace to the inhabitants.

When Steve and I crossed over we felt we had passed into the East at once. The streets became narrower, more winding, if possible more uneven; the passers-by became less European. Unexpected vistas, around queer jutting angles of dead walls, overhung by occasional latticed windows adjoining carefully grilled and bolted doorways, always with the slender spire of some minaret in the background, kept appearing and passing before us. Women in the loose black shapeless garments of the Mohammedan, their faces and hair closely veiled in the old-fashioned white yashmak, moved quietly round corners and disappeared. Grave turbaned Turks, eagle-featured, stalked past us, politely unconscious of the presence of the infidel. Occasionally a donkey, laden with charcoal strapped on a packsaddle, driven by a peasant from the mountains, would block the entire alleyway forcing us to the wall.

We found ourselves in a street where all the workers were wood carvers, caught glimpses of others where they were weavers, tinsmiths, blacksmiths, ropemakers. We had heard there was one of working jewellers in silver filigree but could not find it, nor that of the copper-smiths, at first. In these streets every man worked at his trade in an open-fronted shop. We stopped whenever we felt inclined, walked in and

watched. Sometimes the worker would look up to see if we wished to purchase any of the completed articles; but more often he kept on busily, taking no notice of the intrusion.

Turning round a corner we saw against the sky the outline of a large domed building of beautiful old red brick-work, picked out in a design of interlaced blue tiles. Moss and stonewort grew over the ruined dome. A muddy narrow passage wound down to a hole in the side, where once there had been a door; and picking our steps we wandered within, attracted by the metallic sound of anvil hammering. Even in decay we could see what a beautiful building it must once have been—the great dome, star-pierced at intervals, swept up so superbly from the four supporting walls. Once it had been the cooling room of a great Hammam, where ladies of the harems of long dead Pashas had gossiped, lying languorously, fanned by Nubian slaves, on the divans around the walls through sultry afternoons. Now it was a shoeing smithy tenanted by grimy Albanians. In one corner a blacksmith, sitting crosslegged, was fashioning horseshoes of sheet iron over his charcoal fire. In another, opposite, a nailer was making nails. Lined along the walls were a number of rough mountain ponies, with packsaddles, who kicked viciously every time anyone approached near them. No one took any notice of us, so we wandered round finding our way into the old bath rooms, massage rooms, depilatoria, clambering over fallen bricks, under low archways, along dark ruinous passages, until suddenly we found ourselves in the daylight again, where the roof of one of the domes had fallen in. Climbing over a brick wall we debouched on the street of the wheelwrights, grave turbaned men sitting cross-legged, using the old fashioned tenon-saw and adze one used to see coloured pictures of in old family Bibles. Now I remembered, and whenever we stopped to look on I gave the courteous Eastern salutation "Peace be with thee."

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For a moment the grave brown eyes of the master carpenter would look up. "And to thee peace" he would answer, quietly resuming his occupation.

Round and about we wandered. We came again on the streets of trades, makers of saddle-bags, cord-wainers, potters, blacksmiths shoeing the cloven hoofs of oxen—everyone busy at his occupation. We were deep in the Turkish quarter, and had lost all sense of direction. But we knew that if we kept working westward we were sure eventually to strike the Vardar, and find the bridge, so we wandered on happily.

It was all particularly new and fascinating to Steve.

"I have a hunch this would look mighty odd in Portland, Oregon," he said.

At the time we were watching three men spinning whipcord. The motive power working the spindles was produced by the operatives walking backwards, each with a rope round his waist which, unwinding as he pulled on it, rotated the pulley of the spindle whilst his fingers wove the strands infinitely delicately. The simplicity of it associated with the beautiful results in the plaited cord struck us very much.

"I call that some stunt," said Steve enthusiastically.

When we got back to our quarters it was lunch time; and now we began to find that many of the things we looked upon almost as necessaries were unobtainable. To our questions Ike, who was in charge of the commissariat, had one invariable reply:

"Ain't got none."

There was no butter, no cheese, no biscuits, no jam, no forks, no teaspoons, no cups, and so on. The number of things we hadn't got was quite wonderful. None of us had any previous idea we needed so much impedimenta. Let me remind you it was the first three months of the war, and none of us had yet learnt how little really was required for comfort.

Our Serbian cook, we found, was an amateur of

remarkably constricted ideas. Our two "sestras" were willing but incompetent.

Luckily we had taken the precaution to engage a Maltese cook on the way through.

"When Charlie gets the kitchen to himself we shall be all right," said the Chief, and everyone agreed, cheerfully.

After lunch we gravitated mutually to the "Salon" —the name we had given to the room occupied by Steve and Stretton. It was the largest room in the house, and had a splendid roaring stove around which there was ample room to circle our camp chairs.

The Chief began by telling us how he had been wandering round looking at the various places available as improvised hospitals. It seemed that the Paget unit, which had arrived nearly a week in front of us, had appropriated the "Gymnasium," a fine block of buildings used formerly as a technical school, and capable of accommodating three hundred beds. Previous to their arrival the Serbs had managed to overcrowd some five hundred patients into it. The first thing the English unit had done was to insist on all the patients being evacuated and on having the whole place cleaned out, in order that new beds, linen, and ward equipment could be introduced, proper sanitary arrangements made, an operating theatre set up—in fact all the essentials of a fully equipped English Hospital provided. Already they had been almost a week busily engaged with their ample equipment, their full staff of nurses, orderlies, surgeons, getting things in order. It looked as though they would be another fortnight before they were ready to start. And all the while thousands of wounded were pouring daily into the town, weary, footsore, undressed, overwhelming the hospitals already established. At this time the Serbs were retreating daily before the Austrians, fighting savagely, hopelessly, against overwhelming odds, short of small-arm ammunition, practically without shells. And as they retreated the hos-

pitals in Northern Serbia were being hastily evacuated, trainload after trainload of maimed helpless wrecks, undressed, untreated, in battered uniforms were being dumped anywhere, wherever there was anything like a hospital. Nish was so overcrowded the wounded were lying uncared for in the streets; and as fast as they could be sent back they were being pushed on here, to Veles, to Ghevgeli, even to Monastir, through Greece. It was a horrible condition of affairs.

Whilst Steve and I had been sightseeing, Barclay had been up at the "Number One Hospital" in the Fortress; and the sights he had seen there had set him itching to begin. There were three men to every two beds, pushed side to side. The beds were for the serious cases only. The rest had no beds. They slept anywhere—in the corridors, in the neighbouring mosque, in cafés round, in stables—anywhere. There was no room, and still they kept coming. The "Sanitary Trains" arrived at intervals from two in the morning onwards, full of sick and wounded. That afternoon we watched such a trainload arrive. At the station all the available fiacres, decrepit structures drawn by equally forlorn horses, awaited them. Into the fiacres the silent wounded were packed—we noticed how silent they were—still in their dirty torn uniforms, with their filthy first field dressings, gaunt, hollow eyed, absolutely apathetic. And then the long procession started through the winding streets, bumping over the impossible pavements, to improvised hospitals, already overcrowded, already unable even to house them.

Such being briefly the condition of affairs, we were all very anxious to know what the authorities proposed doing with us, and what sort of arrangements were being made to turn us to immediate use. Apparently there was no idea of attaching us to a Field unit, our civilian status, our want of training in military matters, our ignorance of the language being insuperable barriers. What they wanted us to do was to run a Hospital.

It seemed we had the choice of three buildings, all close together, and just behind our quarters. These had originally been storehouses for tobacco in the old days of the Turkish Regie, and were large brick-built factory-like structures. The largest, "Number One," had space accommodation for six hundred beds; the other two for approximately three hundred each. "Number One" had three great floors, each containing two hundred beds. It was lit feebly with a few electric lights on each floor; but there was no water of any sort laid on, and absolutely no inside sanitary accommodation. The other two smaller buildings had water taps on each floor, but no lighting arrangements, and no sanitary accommodation. There was no place in any of the three buildings which could be used as an operating theatre.

None of the buildings suggested impressed our Chief favourably. To have hundreds of patients, many bedridden, in a huge building without any water supply, and with only outside latrines was not what one would call an ideal situation, and he naturally demurred; but he gave us to understand that he was being pressed greatly by the authorities to take over at least one of the buildings, preferably the largest.

The fact that the other English unit, seventy strong, fully equipped with stores, and with a full complement of trained nurses, felt themselves capable of handling less than three hundred beds, ought to have made us pause. The suggestion that we, six surgeons and twelve orderlies, with only the equipment of a regimental medical officer, should undertake to run a hospital almost as large as St. Thomas', and twice as large as that taken over by the other unit, ought to have filled us with misgiving.

It didn't. We had seen the awful need. We had been three weeks idle on the way out. We had been one whole day in the place; and we were itching to begin. What did we care about an operating theatre;

that could be arranged later. We wanted to start. We wanted to get at the awful foul bandages, and change them. We wanted to lend a hand at once, helping to alleviate the over-pressure existing in all the hospitals run on Serbian lines. When we discovered that one intrepid little Russian lady doctor was trying to run the huge No. 1 building by herself, helped by untrained Serbian "sestras" and "bolnitchers" (male orderlies), we practically got out of hand and stampeded our Chief.

At anyrate he yielded, probably against his better judgment, no doubt feeling exactly as we did ourselves, though unable to admit it without a reservation. It was decided unanimously, therefore, that we should make a start at the "Number One" Hospital as soon as we could take over.

Everyone felt relieved and happy. After dinner that night we gravitated to the "Salon," and circled in our camp chairs round the roaring wood fire, feeling content with all the world. Steve produced his mouth organ, procured with much difficulty at Malta, and regaled us with rag-time tunes and nigger melodies. We had sorted out our kit, and put things handy for the morrow. Already our quarters felt like home. Our men too had caught the same impression. Several of them came from the potteries, and we could hear them now singing part-songs in their dormitory. It is a happy augury when you hear your men singing. Drilling and lecturing them daily on the way out, we had got to know them fairly well, and were confident we could rely upon them in any emergency in this strange country. Presently they quieted down. Soon we too began to feel sleepy, and each commenced to gravitate to his quarters.

Barclay and I took a turn in the courtyard before turning in. The night was very cold. There was a light powder of snow upon the ground. A sickle moon rode high amongst hurrying clouds. In the distance we

could hear the howling of a pariah dog. Away over, on the high dark mountain side on the left, we watched a flashlight winking messages across to the hills on the east, over the sleeping town.

"I think," said I, "we shall be happy here."

"Yes. If the Austrians don't sweep down, and drive us out before we can begin," answered Barclay.

Neither of us thought of an even more deadly enemy. But if we had, I think we would still have taken the course that we did.

CHAPTER III

COMMENCING WORK

Looking round for work—Serbian Surgery—How we discovered the Little Red Woman—Austrian prisoners—Our hospital and its deficiencies—The sudden departure of our " Sanitary Department " ably assisted by boots—" Bolnitchers " and " Sestras "—A challenge in the night—Charlie the Cook—Operations—The grim decision of Stephan Vassalovitch—How Steve persuaded the little Red Woman.

AS the result of our decision to start work as soon as possible, our Chief, accompanied by the British Consul, paid a formal call on the Serbian Commandant who was to have administrative charge of our Hospital, and discussed the preliminary arrangements which would be necessary. Barclay was orderly officer for the day, and, under his guidance, our men were set to work digging latrines in the garden behind our quarters, for we had come up at once against the great difficulty encountered by English people in the Levant—the total absence of anything like the most elementary sanitary arrangements; and this, coupled with the fact that the water was unsafe to drink, was a matter which had to be attended to at once, in order to safeguard the health of the Unit on which the entire success of our Mission depended.

Finding that Stretton and Sherlock had gone off on a tour of inspection by themselves, Steve and I decided we had better visit the Military Hospital in the fortress, to see how the Serbian surgeons treated their cases. Wandering over the bridge and up the main street of the old town, we came upon a building into which patients were being carried on stretchers, and concluded

this must be the place. A sentinel with fixed bayonet stared at us from the archway, but made no move to stop us. Wandering up a stone staircase, we found ourselves in a long corridor lined with mattresses on which men in muddy uniforms were lying anyhow, more or less covered with army blankets.

We tried to talk with someone in a long white coat, evidently a doctor, but it was useless. Presently he brought along a fresh-faced youth of about eighteen in Austrian uniform who could talk a little French, and we then found we were in a Greek Hospital where most of the cases were typhoid, relapsing fever and other medical ailments. The boy informed us he was a prisoner, a medical student from Prague. Then a Swiss woman doctor came along and explained that the hospital for which we were looking was on the opposite side, in the "Grad," the old Turkish fortress which overlooked the river.

Making our apologies we left. At the "Grad" we found a very military person in charge, blue and gold uniform, peaked Serbian cap, boots and spurs complete. He was a Major in the Serbian Army Medical Corps, and, it was soon obvious to us, was a first-class surgeon.

There had been fierce fighting along the Kolubara, and the wounded were arriving in hundreds from Nish by the Sanitary train which had just come in. As they were admitted their great coats and accoutrements were made up in bundles, labelled, and piled in rows. Then the patients walked, or were carried on stretchers, into a long room crowded with hundreds already waiting to be dressed. Each new patient came, or was brought, to one of half a dozen operating tables to be examined; the field dressing was taken off, and the wounds cleaned up by one or other of the assistants. Then the Major came along, and a rapid diagnosis was made. Sometimes he would pass on quickly, sometimes stop and ask a question. Every now and again he would run his fingers over an arm, leg or chest, feel a bullet or a

piece of shrapnel, grip it between his fingers, and with a rapid cut of the knife turn it out without bothering about any anæsthetic. It was fierce, rapid, mediæval surgery; and the patients stood it without even a murmur. They were all so quiet, so apathetic, so very tired.

I asked the Major if he had no chloroform. He stared at me a moment, then his brows cleared.

"But yes. There is chloroform, only we have not time to use it," he said, skilfully extracting another bullet which he dropped with a metallic clatter into a basin carried behind him by an expectant orderly.

By now Steve and I had seen enough. We returned slowly to our quarters rather quiet and depressed. It was obvious the amount of work to be done was overwhelming. But how we were going to tackle it, how we were going to surmount the difficulties of language, how we could ever hope to do anything like an aseptic operation in this sea of pus—all these difficulties loomed enormous before us.

"Guess, Father, we've got to wade right in," said Steve. "But it's a tough proposition."

When we got back we found that Stretton and Barclay had been over at our new hospital, doing dressings, and making the acquaintance of the Russian lady doctor. They were bubbling over with enthusiasm, for they had been working whilst we had been merely looking on.

"That little red-headed woman is a marvel," said Barclay. "The way she handles the awful crowd is wonderful. She's been at it since eight this morning. She's been up twice in the night. She's going to carry on all afternoon. And do you know what's worrying her most? You'd never guess. She's afraid we'll take the place from her. Good Lord! To think of it."

Then Stretton chimed in.

"She speaks English, French, German, Russian and

Serbian. She's twenty-two years of age. She's been at this awful game for two months single handed; and she's as keen as mustard. I vote we insist on hanging on to her. She wants to work with us. She's awfully funky the Chief will insist on turning her out. Let's insist on having her. If it were only to interpret she'd be worth her weight in gold."

The thought of this heroic little woman over at the Hospital, struggling alone all afternoon, kept worrying us throughout lunch. Officially we were not yet in possession, but there was no reason why we should not give her a hand until we were. Accordingly the five of us strolled over after lunch. The building was just at the end of our garden, over the road. A red cross flag flew over the gateway, underneath which in Serbian characters was a large sign:—

"Chetire Reserba Bolnitza," which meant 4th Reserve Hospital, a term with which we were destined to become only too familiar. Inside was a gravelled yard in which a number of slouching men in untidy blue-grey uniforms were sawing logs for firewood, or carrying cans of water from a tap in the middle of the yard. Their fair hair and mild blue eyes proclaimed at once their Saxon origin. It was our first encounter with the Austrian prisoner of war who was to be such a familiar object to us later, and we stared at the group curiously as they came uneasily to the salute on our entry. Here were new masters, probably Russians, was their thought; and they wondered dully how we were likely to treat them. Some of them looked healthy enough, but most seemed underfed and languid. Even in this mild November weather they wore their heavy service overcoats, for fear they should be stolen. Some of them had boots, more or less dilapidated. The rest wore Serbian sandals, their boots having disappeared. It was difficult not to feel sorry for them, prisoners in a strange country, fighting in a cause for which they had no heart. The roughly clad Serbian guard with fixed

bayonet in charge of the gang, a patriot to his finger-tips, looked on at them with contemplative indifference. He had a cause for which he was content to die. That was the distinction.

The Hospital was a huge tobaccco store, 250 by 40 feet, with a cemented basement, and three wooden floors above, connected by rough staircases at either end. The ground floor, along one side, was piled high with bundles of clothing tied with rope, which represented the belongings of the patients on the floors above. Close to these were some five or six bodies wrapped in sheets, the dead of the night before. At the rear end a portion had been boarded off. This was the " magazin " or hospital store house.

We climbed the end staircase to the first floor. It ran the full length of the building, and there were two hundred beds in it, all occupied. Not a window was open, and the smell struck us almost with a physical impact. We climbed to the second floor. It was a replica of the first. The men lay in the beds, clothed mostly in the uniform they wore on admission. Three or four wood-burning stoves gave a feeble heat down the centre of the immense ward. About these stoves such patients as were able to crawl congregated for heat, and everyone who could do so was smoking, even the men in bed had cigarettes between their lips. Seeing that all the internal fittings were of wood, and that there were absolutely no precautions against fire, this struck us as a particularly casual arrangement. Afterwards we tried to improve matters by refusing to allow patients to smoke in bed, or during the night; but when our backs were turned we knew they recommenced again; and as a matter of fact their pleasures were so few we never had the heart to get angry. Living in a country where everything is left to chance, we too grew careless in time; and luckily during our stay nothing occurred to make us regret it. But the thought of what would have happened to several hundred bedridden

men if there had been a fire makes me have cold shivers still.

The third floor was slightly different from the others. Its ceiling was much higher; and it had three long French windows in the west gable which gave quite a good light at that end. It was there all the dressings were done; and it was there also we found the activities of the hospital in evidence. A space thirty feet square had been left free of beds; and a few benches were lined round this for the accommodation of waiting patients. Not only were these filled, but there were rows and rows of wounded standing crowded in front of them, making it necessary to push one's way through the moving mass to get to the dressing tables. These were simply wooden shutters set on trestles. There were three of them, and cases which could not walk were carried on stretchers and placed on them recumbent. When we arrived all three were occupied, and the little woman doctor, in a brown holland smock, was flitting backwards and forwards from one to the other, talking volubly all the time she was pushing strips of iodoform gauze, with a probe, into sinuses in arms, and legs and thighs.

Helping her were a number of voluntary workers, various ladies from the town, two first year medical students, a clerk unfit for military service, an Italian youth who was an electrical engineer. All of them, except the students, were quite untrained; but the pressure was so great that they had been diagnosing and treating fractures quite on their own.

Every patient, after he had his dressing finished, presented his "Leesta." This was a long sheet of paper, like a "galley slip," on which were the particulars as to his name and number, regiment, division, etc., the place and date of his wound, the diagnosis and treatment—all in Serbian. It would have been more intelligible to me if it had been in Greek. As it was, none of us could make anything of it at first, until we got to know what was essential. We were constantly,

therefore, appealing to the "Little Red Woman" for help in the matter, until we discovered the use of the Serbian lieutenant seated at a table near one of the windows, a fourth year student recalled from Moscow by the war. He was the record secretary, and when a new case came along his duty was to write down the diagnosis, and tell the patient when to come again.

The diagnosis we found was written in Latin. That was all right. But the dates confused us, because the Serb like the Russian uses the old unrevised Julian Calendar which is some twelve days behind ours. At first we found it necessary to think back; but soon we forgot what date it really was, and so came naturally to use the Serbian one.

Somehow or other we managed to muddle through that first afternoon. Not being able to talk to the patients made it rather like veterinary surgery, but in most cases the wounds were so obvious, and the things necessary to do so plain, there was really no need to worry about the handicap of language.

When we had finished dressing a man, we simply brought him to the secretary, held up one, two or three fingers, and smiled. Lt. Joritch smiled back, and wrote down "To return in one, two or three days" as required. Then we tackled a fresh case from the apparently inexhaustible supply that kept coming up the stairs, and crowding out the waiting space.

One of the advantages that had been held out to us, as an inducement to take over the hospital, was that it was fitted with electric light. Had we known the country we would not have been influenced by this at all; for the installation was of the poorest, there wasn't a lamp above eight candle power in the building, and, to make things worse, the current was in the habit of constantly getting tired. Naturally it failed completely on this our first evening. No one seemed in the least surprised, for as it grew dark someone produced from somewhere four miserable oil lamps. One was placed

near the secretary, and one on each dressing table. With these we struggled on until dinner time, dressing, dressing, dressing all the while. Then we broke off, not because the cases were finished, but because we had used up all the available dressings and the " Little Red Woman " said all the urgent cases had been seen.

It was a very tired but happy group that assembled in the " Salon " that evening. We felt we were in harness. The difficulty of the language had turned out not so formidable as we had anticipated. The doubt as to whether or not there would be enough work for us was completely settled. It was obvious that the immediate crying need was to turn ourselves into a Casualty Clearing Station, to help to lessen the pressure nearer the fighting line by diagnosing, treating and clearing back still further, all the cases we could. It was equally obvious that any attempt to run our place on the lines of an English Base Hospital, without nurses, with only a ten per cent. proportion of the orderlies required, and with the totally inadequate stores which we knew were following us from Salonique, was bound to fail. We were pleased, therefore, to find that our Chief was now concentrating on getting an operating theatre equipped, and enough interpreters to make it easy for each of us to find out what the patients really complained of, rather than on his former dream of having a properly equipped hospital on English lines.

The terms on which our services had been accepted by the Serbian government were that we should be provided with lodging, fuel and light, together with an allowance in lieu of rations of three dinars (francs) per diem, in exchange for our services. They had wanted at first also to pay us a monthly salary; but as the British Red Cross were already doing this we did not require it. Considering the poverty of the country, even at the time it seemed to us we were being treated very generously; but when we came to discover how very straitened the Serbian government really was, we

took it upon ourselves to decline the ration allowance, retaining only the fuel and light, as, without official orders, it was almost impossible to obtain wood at all, even in Macedonia where it was much more abundant than in Northern Serbia.

When the Chief had gone, we drew our camp chairs round the stove again, top-boots off tired feet, tunics unbuttoned, in slippered ease, the room thick with tobacco smoke, through which the oil lamp and the glow of the wood fire cast a comfortable brightness. Even Steve was quiet.

Presently Barclay leant forward, his blue eyes and fair hair shining in the firelight as he threw his cigarette end into the glowing embers.

"As I was saying last night to Johnston Abraham, if the Austrians don't come along and capture us, or the Bulgars cut us off from Salonique by breaking the line, we ought to be very happy here for the next six months."

Stretton, Roman nosed, shaggy eyebrowed, looked up aggressively at the word "capture" and broke in:—

"I'd hate that. I'd try to trek into Montenegro by bullock waggon, or over the Greek frontier to Monastir, before I'd wait to be caught."

Steve nodded his head vigorously in agreement.

"No prisoner for me. Not on your life," he said vigorously.

"Oh you. You'd be all right. They'd take you for an American," said Sherlock with a twinkle. That drew Steve at once.

"No, Siree. I don't fly 'Old Glory' this trip. Nothing doing."

The second day saw us at work at nine in the morning. We brought four of our orderlies, leaving the remainder to finish the sanitary arrangements of our quarters. The Little Red Woman was already there, dressing a special favourite of her own who had

a very septic compound fracture of the left thigh, and was a mere recumbent scaffolding of bones from which some skin and flesh depended. He ought to have been dead. He ought to have had his thigh amputated weeks before; but he clung to his awful limb and to life with the tenacity of a wild animal, and the Little Red Woman dressed him twice daily to the neglect of others because, woman like, she had set her heart on getting him well. With his hollow eyes, sunken lined cheeks, and neglected straggling beard, he looked seventy. In reality he was under thirty. Nothing ages a man so rapidly in appearance as privation and wounds. We were continually being surprised at the age of our patients. Always it was much less than we had guessed.

Off the dressing area there was a little boarded room in which lotions were kept, bandages, splints and dressings piled up, and a few drugs in dirty bottles stored. Here we used to hang up our tunics, don each a blue and white striped overall, and sally forth. For washing purposes there was a tin basin, and a can of water. When we wanted more water for making up lotions, or for washing our hands, we had to send a man down three flights of stairs to the tap in the yard outside. Frequently he used to forget to return. Then we sent another man to find him, and he too would disappear. After that there would be an appeal to the Little Red Woman, and then with an immense flow of words, much gesticulation, eyes flashing from beneath her head of red hair, a " bolnitcher " (ward orderly) would be impelled reluctantly to seek the lost one, protesting all the time that it was not his job.

When a dressing was taken off, theoretically it was dropped into a large circular bin; but, as there were twenty people dressing, and only two bins, those who were too far off had not the time to push through the crowd to get to them. The dressings therefore were dropped on the wooden floor, and trodden in. Every

now and again, from the void there would appear a decrepit old Tzigane (gipsy) with a very dirty face and dirtier turban, a rusty patch-work smock and baggy trousers, who, with lean prehensile fingers would seize one of the bins, grab any other mass of dressings near, and carry them away. These burdens he used to dump on a piece of waste ground outside the hospital, returning again for more. This and carrying water was his job. We used to dub him "The Sanitary Department." Who had appointed him to the post nobody knew. The Little Red Woman thought he had taken it on his own. What he got out of it at first we could not discover, until we found that whenever he dumped a mass of septic cotton-wool and bandages outside, two or three ancient crones used to go over it carefully, pick out every bit of cotton-wool that was at all clean, and carry off the stuff to line the padded waistcoats and quilts so beloved of the Balkan people. It did not strike us as a very rapid way of making a fortune, until we discovered that any stray scissors, or knives, left around used also to disappear, and one fine morning, a few days later, the little woman caught the old ruffian, red-handed, walking off with a complete new roll of cotton-wool under his arm. What she said I do not know, but I remember seeing him start to run, propelled from behind by the boot of a " bolnitcher." A shouting went down the stairs, and a relay of grim faces and kicking boots greeted him all the way to the bottom. It is said he rolled the last flight of stairs head over heels. That was the last we saw of the " Sanitary Department." Evidently he took it as a polite intimation that his services were no longer required, and transferred his activities elsewhere.

To anyone accustomed to the ordered cleanliness of an English hospital, and its elaborate paraphernalia for the treatment and care of the patients, it is impossible adequately to describe the conditions we were forced to work under in those early days, before we had been able

to introduce some sort of system into the hospital. In our huge wards we never had time to go round the beds, so as to know the cases. On an average there were always three patients to every two beds, the beds being pushed side by side. The men lay unwashed for weeks. At the head of each bed was the man's haversack, projecting from which was a round loaf of rye bread. This was his daily ration. If he was too ill to eat it, his neighbour ate it for him, or he peddled it away for small cakes, sweetmeats and cigarettes carried round by itinerent vendors who found their way into the wards, and bought the bread at 35 centimes a loaf. In addition there was a certain amount of soup and meat given out, but in the most haphazard way. If a man was too ill to sit up, or hold out his hand for food when it was being passed round, he got none. The worst cases, therefore, if they had no friends looking after them, died without our knowing of it.

Of nursing proper there was none. What was done was by the so-called " sestras," totally ignorant women of the peasant class. If a wounded man had a wife, or sister or daughter in the neighbourhood, she used to come and look after him. Frequently we used to find a woman sleeping in her clothes between two men. She was either a relation, or one of the " sestras " attached to the hospital. No one seemed to think it in the least strange, and we too soon became accustomed to it. In addition there were a certain number of male " bolnitchers " (orderlies). Some of these were ex-soldiers, and had a rough knowledge of surgical first aid. Most of them, however, were civilians exempt for some reason from military service. They slept amongst the patients in the hospital, and drew rations, but no pay. Some of them worked splendidly, as did most of the "sestras." Others did nothing. They used to slip out of the hospital in the morning, roam about the town all day, spend what money they had, and return to sleep in the hospital at night. How they got the money to sit all

day in cafès puzzled us at first, till we found out that they systematically robbed the dead and dying of their poor possessions, whilst pretending to look after them. Other sources of income more or less legitimate we discovered later. There were a considerable number of patients who were able to walk to the dressing area to have their wounds attended to. They could look after themselves; but, owing to the fact that we were too busy to go round the wards, those unable to walk had to be carried on stretchers to the dressing room, and so were dependent on the " bolnitchers " bringing them. Very soon we noticed that certain patients were brought regularly, whereas others we wanted to see did not appear again, sometimes for several days, sometimes not at all. I questioned the Little Red Woman about this. Her eyes flashed furiously.

" Oh, the devils," she exclaimed. " They will bring but those who them can tip. I one man caught. The Major, when I told him was very angry. He slapped the man's face and gave him the dismissal. But he did not care. He had made two hundred dinars in one month. The others, they are all the same. It is an infamy."

All these things of course we discovered afterwards. The amount of work we had to do at first was so overwhelming we had no time to think, no time to formulate any plans, no time to do anything but dress, dress, dress, from morning to night. Hundreds of fresh cases came pouring in daily. The Serbs were in retreat, doggedly contesting every ridge, holding every ravine, throwing up earthworks across the path of the invader, and holding them till they were pounded out of existence by shell fire, miles away, to which they could make no adequate reply, as their own shells were exhausted. It was a horrible time. Every day the news grew worse and worse. The Press Bureau published daily bulletins claiming splendid victories, but no one believed them. There were too many wounded coming back, always

Plate II.—Bread bought from patients being sold in the streets see p. 55.

with a story of retreat after retreat, too many train loads of refugees arriving with the pitiful remnants of their household treasures, to make anyone credit official victories. As to us we were too busy to think about the fortunes of the campaign. We knew too little about the places where fighting was going on to form any adequate idea of the menace. It was only when we got the Consul's copy of the *Weekly Times*, a fortnight late, that we knew what was happening fifty miles away.

Our day's work was something as follows. At five-thirty in the morning our smiling Franz came into each of the three bedrooms, started the fires and lit the lamps to rid the place of the icy atmosphere. At six he came round with bath water, and our "gum" boots. At six-thirty the night orderly reported to the orderly officer. At seven the breakfast bell went, and the day had commenced. After breakfast we had time for a smoke and that desultory shop-talk so beloved of the technically trained mind, so useful in clarifying ideas, crystallising some line of action. At 8.15 the orderly officer marched his men over to the hospital, and set them getting things in order for the day. The rest of the staff followed at 8.30.

At first we found it difficult to get going in the morning. Everything was topsy-turvy; the dressing tables were not set; basins and receptacles were not to be found. Then we discovered that the tables used for dressing were also used previously by the bolnitchers and sestras to take their food off, and the food itself was carried up in the basins used afterwards as dressing bowls.

It sounds almost incredible on looking back on it now, but at the time we were so short of everything we accepted it as a matter of course; and it did not seem to strike the Serbs as at all unusual. Afterwards when our own stores came through, and we realised we could buy things in the town, the equipment improved beyond

recognition; and we came to look upon our Hospital as quite up to date in a Serbian sense, finding that many things we had been accustomed to could be dispensed with entirely, without sacrificing efficiency, a lesson I for one never forgot in the next four years of campaigning.

Once started we worked on steadily until one o'clock, without seemingly making any impression on the number of patients, for as soon as one case was seen and dressed, two more seemed to take his place. The number of perforating wounds of the right arm and hand, I remember, struck us very much at first, until it dawned on us that this hand and arm, holding the rifle, was more exposed than any other part of the body except the head, a shot through which probably killed most of the patients either immediately, or soon afterwards from insufficient treatment before they came our length. There was a tendency, I found, to consider most of these wounds as self-inflicted; but I am convinced that in many cases this was not so, and I always gave such patients the benefit of the doubt, thinking that any man who had faced the hell of the trenches was entitled to it. Still the fact remains that on some mornings we used to get a succession of them; and I have vivid memories of Stretton calling out monotonously his diagnosis as he dashed backwards and forwards to the Secretary's table with the "leestas" of his patients:— "*vulnus schlopetarius antibrachii dextris perforans*" varied occasionally with a "*vulnus shrapnellus brachii dextris penetrans.*"

Everybody worked hard in those days. The immense vitality of the Little Red Woman was a constant stimulus to us all. Half the patients seemed to have rifle bullets or pieces of shrapnel embedded in them somewhere or other. Even the orderlies began to diagnose them, and bring them up to us. In an English hospital each case would have been accurately localised by X-rays, prepared for operation, and the bullet

extracted with rigid aseptic precautions under chloroform. Here we had no time for that. A case would come along to the surgeon, the diagnosis would be made, two or three orderlies instructed to hold the patient, there would be a rapid cut, a quick probe with sinus forceps, a pull and out would come the bullet, to be handed over to the patient or dropped amongst a dozen others into the tin basin on the table.

A dab of iodine and a bandage finished the operation. There was no chloroform, we hadn't time, and the patients were afraid of it. In treatment we had gone back to the period of the Napoleonic wars. Frequently a patient through whose arm a bullet had passed, possibly fracturing one or both bones, would come up, point to the small wound of entrance and the large crateriform exit, shake his head and say "doom doom," obviously under the belief that he had been struck by a "dum dum" or expanding bullet. This to anyone with the knowledge of how a bullet behaves was of course inaccurate.

It is true that specimens of so-called explosive bullets, fitted with a fulminate of mercury core, and said to have been taken from the Mannlicher bullet clips found on Austrian prisoners, were sent to us for inspection from time to time by the Serbian government. They may have been used by snipers, but it is exceedingly unlikely that they were ever issued for volleying—they are too difficult to make, too dangerous for indiscriminate handling, too uncertain in their bursting power to have made their issue on a large scale worth while.

To the lay eye, however, the horrible wound which can be caused by a spinning bullet striking bone, or turning on its long axis, seems capable of only one interpretation; and that is why so many stories of reversed, dum dum, or explosive bullets were told and believed by each of the belligerents against the others. Our own bullet, judging from the wounds in German prisoners,

seems to have been particularly deadly in this way, owing to its unstable centre of equilibrium.

But to resume. We used to break off before one o'clock to allow patients to have their mid-day meal, and ourselves a breathing space. Two o'clock, however, found us back again, working on steadily until five. By this time it was dark, and the miserable oil lamps we possessed made dressing very difficult. Occasionally the electric light was working, and we could get along more quickly; but usually the current was not running, and we fumbled along as best we could. Even then the work was not done. Frequently our bandage rollers would strike, saying they had run out of material. This held us up effectually for the first week, till our own stores arrived. Then we used to break into the precious cases, and use our own beautiful bandages, always feeling that they were too few, and that we dare not use them freely, lest we be left without in an emergency. After five we let our orderlies off; but for us there was no such respite. The Little Red Woman was so indefatigable, that if we did not return we knew she would carry on alone. Of course, we realised none of us could keep at this pressure for long; we could see that she was already verging on a collapse; but for the first few weeks the work was so pressing we felt that we could not allow ourselves to think of exhaustion. When we did get back to our quarters we used to eat our long delayed dinner, and immediately afterwards tumble into bed, too dog-weary almost to speak to one another. So it was day after day. One day was so like another we soon ceased to know which day it was. Sundays and Saturdays were all alike.

One day during the second week, Stretton and I, after a short evening caused by failure of supplies, found the energy to call on the other English unit to see how they were getting on. They were tremendously pleased with themselves, for after surmounting endless difficulties

they were at length ready to "take in," and had that morning received their first cases. How we envied them the cleanliness of the place, the smiling eyes of the sisters, the small wards of some twelve to twenty beds where no one could be overlooked, the washed faces and clean bodies of the patients actually clad in new pyjamas, lying between real sheets which were changed whenever required. The contrast to our own place made our hearts ache. And yet—I think we were glad we were not as they. It was all very nice, very right, just as it should be—and yet.

"I think," Stretton said slowly, "we are doing what the Serbs really want at present."

"I'm sure of it," I answered. "What we are is a Clearing Station. What they want at present is a Clearing Station. The men have to be seen in numbers, roughly diagnosed, sufficiently treated for the time being, and passed on to make room for others. That's what the military machine wants."

And that, we knew was what was happening at our hospital. We were just outside the station; and by every train patients arrived and walked in on us, or were dumped on us in stretchers just as they were, unwashed, undressed, unclassified, with the mud of the trenches and the first field dressing of their ten-day-old wounds still unchanged. We saw them, dressed them, fed them for a day or so; and then round would come the Commandant, Major Suskalovitch, with his orderly officer, a rapid inspection of the beds would be made, the "leestas" of all the men capable of being moved taken away, a train load made up, and off they would go to Veles, Ghevgeli, Kalkandelen, Monastir, anywhere further back on the Mitrovitza or Salonika line, to make room for more and more coming in from the front.

It consoled us, coming back from the beautifully arranged hospital we had just been seeing, to feel that we truly were doing men's work, that we were an essential part of the machine.

As we were walking back in the darkness after our visit, stumbling over the uneven cobble stones close to the Vardar bridge, we were challenged loudly, but were so engrossed we took no notice. The challenge was repeated louder and more peremptorily. We stopped but could see no one in the darkness.

Then suddenly we found ourselves confronted by two roughly clad sentries. One pushed his bayonet perilously near Stretton's abdomen, and shouted excitedly at him.

"Here. Take your damned toasting fork away from that," retorted Stretton peevishly, not understanding a word.

I was wondering what possible use the sentry could make of this, when the man settled it for me by suddenly laughing.

"Say, Mister. You American?" he asked.

"No, English," Stretton answered gruffly.

"Reckon that's all right. I bin America."

He was a patriotic Serb who had returned to his country when war was declared. From being fiercely suspicious and bloodthirsty, he suddenly veered round to extreme friendliness, and a child-like desire to air his English before his silent companion. The answer to the challenge, he said, was "Prijatelj" (friend). He told us that his name was Marko Markovitch. We gave the pair of them some cigarettes, and parted the best of friends. Frequently afterwards in our night rambles we used to stop and have a yarn with Marko.

By this time we were beginning to settle down in our new quarters. We had got rid of our Serbian women helpers; Charlie, our fat Maltese cook, was in possession of the kitchen, and food more or less like that to which we were accustomed began to appear. Our ubiquitous dragoman Ike was also very much in evidence. He bought everything for us, as none of the unit as yet had any knowledge of Serbian. For his services he was

supposed to receive no pay. When therefore he began to show signs of always having money to spend in wine shops we began to wonder; but as he was still indispensable we said nothing, for when not buying provisions, utensils, etc., he was acting as interpreter between us and the Commandant; and we also found him useful in the hospital. He was so clever, so active, so untiring, it was impossible not to admire him. He could get us five dinars more for the sovereign than the Franco-Serbian Bank gave. He knew where everything could be bought, and what price should be paid for it. How much commission he got on purchases we could not determine. According to the immemorial custom of the country he was entitled to "bakshish" whenever he could get it. But it fretted the Chief all the time; he never quite trusted him; and the man knew it. A sort of armed neutrality sprang up between them, and we could see that soon they would come to an open breach.

But there were other matters more pressing than the questionable honesty of Ike. During the day we had more or less control over the patients' treatment; but at night this was not so. Then they were left to the tender mercies of the bolnitchers, and what this meant we had soon occasion to know. A patient in a state of collapse was put on "Koniak," a crude brandy of Greek manufacture. As it was necessary for him to have it in the night, the full bottle was entrusted to the head bolnitcher. The result was that the bottle was empty in the morning, the patient had had none, but four of the bolnitchers got fighting-drunk on it, and a delirious man with a fractured arm, wandered out naked in the night, and was picked up dead in the morning.

That determined us to draw upon our small quota of men, and appoint one of our orderlies to do night duty. Even though he could not speak a word of the language, anything would be better than the treatment they had

been receiving, and with the aid of a night interpreter things might be possible.

Eventually we did get a sort of interpreter. He was a Bohemian who had been a teacher of music before the war. His Serbian was bad, and his English worse; but he could speak Hungarian and Roumanian, and so was rather useful at times. We called him the "White Rabbit." He looked it, and remained the "White Rabbit" until the end of the chapter. A furious rivalry sprang up at once between him and Ike, who regarded him as an intruder, and probably a spy upon himself. I believe he was honest and served us to the best of his ability.

Another of our early troubles was the question of operations. Before anything extensive could be done, it was the regulation that there must be a consultation between our Major and the Chief. After that the patient's own consent had to be obtained. And then the operation was done. As a consequence, of course, precious time was constantly lost at first. One man came in with diffuse cellulitis of the thigh, a deep brawny inflammation that obviously required extensive incisions, and almost certainly an amputation. The case was under Barclay's care; but the Major and the Chief were not available; the patient knew nothing of these strange doctors who could not even speak his language, and wanted to take his leg off. Naturally he got terrified, and flatly refused everything, so that by the time the machinery was set working it was too late. He died next day before anything could be done.

After the first week, however, things began to improve; and by the time our theatre was ready we were able to make ample use of it. To begin with, the Major had seen the quality of our work, and was satisfied to leave decisions to our judgment. By this time too the patients, newly arrived, learnt from the older ones that they were safe in our hands. In addition the Little Red Woman had become our warm advocate,

and was able to go round, telling them what we had done for others, and advising consent to our wishes whenever we said it was necessary to operate. Thus eventually it became simply a matter of consent on the patient's part, and the operation was proceeded with at once.

But even then there was the immense difficulty of the patient's consent. The Serb is a primitive man, with all the horror of a primitive man for any maiming operation. Again and again we would tell a patient he ought to have, for instance, his foot off, and he would refuse absolutely, clinging to the desperate hope that time might heal him. Then as he grew steadily worse, racked with pain, feeling his strength ebbing, he would at last give a grudging consent, only to be told that the time for such an amputation was past, the disease had spread further, and we could no longer hold out any prospect of cure below the knee joint.

Austrian prisoners on the other hand were much more amenable to suggestion, more accustomed to the thought of the surgeon's knife, more docile in every way. For the most part they were dwellers in towns, accustomed to hospitals, and they showed a touching confidence in our skill, and a willingness to submit to any necessary proceeding, that made them ideal patients.

The Serb was quite different. The wild free man in him hated the surgeon and all his works, hated the thought that, after recovering from some suggested operation, he might no longer be able to swing along the mountain track, hour after hour beside his pack mule loaded with charcoal, guide his slow-moving oxen at the plough, or follow the bear, rifle in hand, up the sides of the precipitous tree-clad ravine at the base of which his village nestled.

As I write I can remember one such patient, a thin wasted black-bearded fellow, the remains of a once powerful swift-moving man—Stefan Vassalovitch.

When I came to examine him, he watched me with the pitiful brown eyes of a wounded animal. Both his legs were gangrenous from frost bite followed by septic infection. The Little Red Woman was with me at the time, and very tenderly she told him what we thought. He asked for a day to make up his mind, saying his wife was coming from some far away village off the line, and he must have her consent before he could submit to any operation. The woman came. I saw her, a squat peasant woman with a heavy impassive weather-beaten face under her gaudy handkerchief, wearing a thick white sheepskin padded coat, a gaily embroidered skirt, coarse red and blue stockings and thonged sandals. We talked to her at the bedside, the little woman and I. She refused absolutely. She said she would rather see her husband die than have him maimed for life. There was no one else to work the little farm, to drive the oxen to market, to tend the sheep, to gather in the maize. She said she would rather be a widow than have a helpless cripple on her hands. She talked to us quite simply, quite impassively, and the man agreed with her, every word. It was not callousness. In its way it was the ultimate sacrifice. You must remember there was no provision for the maimed in Serbia, no wounds pension for the disabled soldier, no poor law, nothing. He would simply be a burden on her shoulders for life; they both knew it; and he elected to die. It was in vain that we protested. The Little Red Woman almost wept. It was useless. They had made up their minds that he was better dead.

He did die.

Looking back on it now I do not know what we should have done without the Little Woman. She was so wonderful, so enthusiastic, so energetic, so fiery, so emotional, so very brave, so wrongheaded at times, so intensely feminine. We were all on the strain to keep up with her. We never knew what new Quixotism

she would involve herself in next. She acted as an intermediary between us and the patients, explaining, re-explaining, calming their fears, overcoming their suspicions, making them feel what we could not express to them in words, our overwhelming desire to do every possible thing we could for them. She apologised for our foibles to the Serbian authorities, especially to our courteous old Commandant, Major Suskalovitch, explaining that our attempts to get open windows and cross ventilation were not absolutely criminal, but only an English fad, to be more or less humoured; that our wish to have in-patients washed was part of our upbringing, and ought to be encouraged if they could find time to lay on water in the hospital; that our strictures on the awful sanitary arrangements were more or less justified. It was she who persuaded them to let us fit up an operating theatre in an adjoining building, away from the septic atmosphere of the hospital. It was she, also, who explained that two of us were Fellows of the College of Surgeons, and therefore presumably fit to be trusted to do any form of major operation. Taking her on sufferance at first, we soon came to consider her the most essential part of our unit.

It was about that time, I think, that Sherlock, who had made great friends with her, discovered that she was living in a room by herself in the administrative block, and was having her food sent in haphazard at any time, that she had no friends in the place except our old Commandant, and was as much a stranger in a strange land as ourselves.

That gave him an idea.

"I say, look here you fellows. We've got to make her join our mess," he said one night, when we had been discussing how useful she was to us.

"I call that a mighty bright idea," said Steve.

"I'm ashamed to think we never thought of it before," said Barclay.

"It seems to be carried by acclamation," I said.

Then we told the Chief, who gave a cautious approval, and Sherlock was deputed to broach the subject to her.

To his consternation she refused absolutely. Then we tackled her severally, telling her how disappointed we would be, how honoured we should feel if she reconsidered the matter, and how much we depended on her presence to keep us from degenerating into absolute barbarians.

"But, no. You do not want me really," she would say. "I shall be what you call a restrain. No."

Finally we told her we expected her to dinner on Saturday night at seven o'clock, and a place would be laid for her.

Saturday night came. Seven o'clock came. Charlie sent to announce that dinner was ready, and we trooped in. But no Doctor Kadish—that was her name.

Steve was the orderly officer.

"Guess I've got to fetch her," he said, tightening his belt.

Then he went over to her room. She was sitting at the stove reading.

"We're waiting for you," he said, noticing at once that she had changed into a black dinner dress.

"But I have said that I cannot come," she retorted.

"Well. I guess I've just got to carry you then. The longer we stay here the colder our dinner gets," he said, stepping across to where her cloak was hanging on a peg.

"Here, put this fluffy thing on, right now."

Then she came without a murmur.

And that settled it.

Every night the orderly officer called for her. Every night after dinner he saw her back to her room. For we had by now discovered a curious thing. In spite of her courage, her freedom from convention, her absolute belief in her power to look after herself, her utter carelessness of danger, she was afraid to go back the short

Plate III. The Little Red Woman and Barclay.

distance from the mess to her room in the dark. She used to laugh at it. She was rather ashamed of it. But she never got over the feeling; and if by chance she had to do it occasionally she ran the whole way in terror—terror of she knew not what, probably some obliterated memory of a fright in her childhood, now forgotten except by the sub-conscious memory.

CHAPTER IV

SETTLING DOWN

A threatened tobacco famine—The easy going methods of the Serbian post office—" Mein Weib und Kinder "—The suspicions of the Russian apothecary—Recurrent fever and how it got us—Why the Magyar was hated—Robinson Crusoe—The trousers of the Austrian Sergeant—A Balkan comedy and the Komitadgi—King's Messengers.

LOOKING back on this period, I remember we were so happy in our work we soon ceased to consider the disabilities we were labouring under, the risks of infection we ran, the constant plague of lice from which, do what we could, we daily suffered. None of these things worried us. But what did, what set us planning and thinking, what became a deep anxiety to us was the fear that we might run short of tobacco. To me especially this was a nightmare. We had been told at Malta we were going straight into the middle of the tobacco country, that cigarettes and cigars were everywhere abundant, that there was no use in carrying coals to Newcastle. Consequently we had each brought with us about a month's supply, and now found ourselves faced with a famine. Tobacco was a government monopoly. Pipe tobacco was unknown in the country. Foreign tobacco was contraband, and could not be imported. The government factory at Belgrade had been destroyed by shell fire, and so no more was being produced. The great tobacco warehouses, such as ours, had been cleared and turned into hospitals. No more cigars were being manufactured; and so there was an imminent likelihood of our soon being without any form of tobacco, good, bad or indifferent. Conse-

quently everyone began to count his stores. I had still a pound, and knew I was safe for a month. Stretton had half a pound. The others had cigarettes only. By skilful diplomacy we managed to secure more from unsuspecting members of the Paget Unit who had not yet grasped the situation. But all this was merely palliative. Then Barclay and I remembered a friend in Malta, and decided to send him a five pound note asking him to forward consignments, when he could, under the label of the St. John Ambulance Association, so as to dodge the Greek and Serbian Customs. But how to get the letter to him safely was the difficulty, for that was another of our troubles. There was a rigid censorship in Serbia, and all letters posted in Uskub had to be sent open to the censor's office for transmission. This did not please us at all. It was early in the war, we were still civilians with the minds of civilians, and the thought of any censor reading our letters was most distasteful. It was a feeling we never got over; and all the time we were there we were constantly on the lookout for some reliable messenger to take them to Salonika, where they could be posted without censorship. Sometimes it was the Consul's kavass, sometimes a passing King's Messenger, sometimes a friendly British officer travelling south from Nish. Often we were several weeks without a reliable courier. Sometimes we would get three in a week. Whenever any of us heard of one we passed the information on to the other unit. Whenever they were sending a messenger they told us and a bag was made up. It seemed to be the usual thing to do. The Consul, who had been there in Turkish times, practically never used the Serbian post office. It reminded him too much of the old Turkish service in its happy-go-lucky methods.

Most of the officials in the post office were unable to read addresses written in Latin characters. They could recognise only the curious bastard Greek, known as Cyrillic, used by the Serbians, and with slight differences

by the Russians. Consequently, they soon got into the habit of sorting letters by the stamps. Any letter, therefore, coming into Serbia with English stamps came automatically to us, as we were the nearest English unit to the frontier; and so we got bundles for all sorts of stray English people, loose in Serbia, of whom we knew nothing—letters which we had to re-direct as well as possible, only to find, as likely as not, that they were re-delivered to us again three or four days later, on the logical grounds that, as they were still addressed in English, they must still be for us.

The postmen, too, were equally haphazard. They delivered letters when they pleased. If an occasional present was not given to them they used to forget to deliver them at all, allowing them to accumulate quite casually at the post office till someone called to enquire.

All these things we discovered quite quickly, so that, about the time we were worried over our tobacco, it was with great delight we heard that a King's Messenger was coming through from Sofia, would stop for the night, and take our precious letter with its five pound note safely to Salonika.

The next day was a Sunday (29th November, 1914). There had been flaming headlines in the local paper about a great victory over the Austrians, which we had vaguely heard but did not believe. We thought it was the same old story, the daily " white lie " to which we became so accustomed in our own Army bulletins later on. As a matter of history it was true. It was the beginning of the great dramatic sweep which took the world by surprise in December 1914, when the Serbs turned in the moment of utter defeat and drove the Austrians once more pell-mell over the Danube, a routed, hopelessly disgraced army, sans guns, sans discipline, sans everything, leaving seventy thousand prisoners behind them, leaving in addition the awful curse which was to cost us all so dear. Luckily we did not know of this last; but what we did know was that,

whether the tale of victory was true or not, there would be train load after train load of wounded coming in, and we had no room for them.

There were two subsidiary buildings close to our Hospital, and during the afternoon a number of straw mattresses had been laid down on their floors. Sherlock, as usual, had been buzzing round, and found out that these were intended for wounded prisoners who were expected to arrive that night. No other preparations had been possible. Towards midnight they arrived, two hundred and seventy-five of them, and somehow they were dumped into the empty buildings. But there were no doctors to look after them, no facilities for treating them.

"It is just as I expected," said Sherlock. "We'll have to take them on in addition to our own. There's no one else to look after them, and we can't leave them to die without some attention."

Of course we did it somehow. We wandered round with oil lamps in the darkness, picking out those that seemed the worst. I remember we were at it most of the night, with the prospect of an overwhelming day in our own hospital on the morrow. The Little Red Woman worked like a Trojan, acting, in addition, as a German interpreter. One case stands out clearly in my mind. He had been shot through both thighs and the bladder. He was a fat, kindly-looking man, a sergeant in some cavalry regiment. I can remember the yellow braid on his riding-breeches quite distinctly, but why that stuck in my mind I cannot tell. He was in intense agony, rolling about and muttering "*Mein weib und kinder—mein weib und kinder.*"

When I spoke to him in halting German his face lit up in the most wonderful way. He felt he had found a friend at last, and poured out a rapid tale to me, of which, of course, I could make nothing. Then the Little Red Woman came to my rescue. Between us we soothed him. It was obvious he was dying. His

wounds were very foul, and had not been attended to for a week. We did what we could to make him comfortable; and I put an orderly on specially to watch him. But in the middle of my work, an hour later, I heard him call out loudly, and then become suddenly still. Running over I found he was dead, soaked in blood, a sudden secondary hemorrhage having finished him. War is a horrible thing.

The next day we dressed over fifteen hundred cases. Twice our bandages ran out, and twice we had to send to the "Grad" (fortress hospital) for more. All our supplies came at that time from the "Grad"; and the Russian apothecary, who was in charge of the stores, became suspicious that something was wrong when he got demands for over three thousand bandages in one day. Accordingly he came down to see us that evening at our quarters. To his surprise we were not there. He had to come over to the hospital to find us. "But, sirs," he said in his precise English. "You do not work every day like so. At the other hospitals they finish at two of the clock."

Steve looked at him pityingly.

"Say, Sonny," he said. "You've got the wrong hunch. This isn't a hospital. This is a 'dump'—some dump, too, by Heck!"

The dapper little man pushed back his peaked Serbian cap, and stared blankly. "He means," said I, "that we are so close to the station they dump every possible walking case on us in addition to filling our beds with compound fractures. The walking cases are cleared off to Veles or Mitrovitza in a day or two, and their place taken by the next set. And so we go on."

The little man smiled. "Aha. I now understand why so much of bandage material is necessaire. I thought it was stolen by the bolnitchers. But no. It is not. I see."

After that we had no difficulty about supplies if they were anywhere available.

By this time we were beginning to evolve some order out of the chaos. We had worked out a system of numbering the beds; we had a night orderly on duty; we had appointed Sherlock physician; and some of the sestras had been taught to take the temperature of such of the patients as seemed particularly feverish. Any temperature over 104 degs. F. was specially visited. We could do no more, for there was an average of between seventy and a hundred even of these amongst the fifteen hundred cases in the three buildings we now had charge of. All this seems very primitive in the retrospect, when one remembers that a temperature of 100 worries everyone from the sister to the surgeon in charge. But we had a lot of recurrent fever with us in our hospital, right from the start, and so soon got accustomed to such stalagmite temperatures.

Recurrent fever was a comparatively new disease to us when we arrived. Most of us had merely an academic knowledge of it; but before we had finished we knew more than enough about it, as nearly all of us got it ourselves. It seems to be endemic in Serbia. During the winter campaign of 1914 it became epidemic, and we had several thousand cases through our hands in the first three months. The Serbs, following Continental nomenclature, call it Typhus Recurrens to distinguish it from Typhus Abdominalis (our Typhoid or Enteric), and Typhus Exanthematicus—Black Typhus, or true Typhus as understood in England.

It is caused by a spirillum and runs a very typical course. There is high fever, intense prostration, and some delirium lasting for about a week. Then comes a rapid fall of temperature, and a week when the thermometer registers normal or subnormal. This is followed by a second and sometimes a third similar rise and fall, till the patient is reduced to a skeleton, almost too weak to turn in bed. Amongst ourselves, at first, we labelled it "Uskubitis," before we recognised the cause. Eventually we simply called it "IT." It com-

plicated things considerably for us, as half our staff were down with it at one time or another. The general opinion is that it is carried from patient to patient by lice. These vermin, of course, swarm in every campaign. Our own men in Flanders suffered badly from them. It can easily be imagined, therefore, what it was like in Serbia, especially in hospitals such as ours, without water, without linen, where the patients never were washed at all, and frequently had no clothes except their ragged, trench-grimed uniforms. Of course we all got infected, dressing and handling these patients. It was inevitable. I need not enlarge upon it; but it will be obvious to the reader how easy it was to contract any disease thus transmitted, in an environment such as that in which we had to work.

Every day now we had a fresh convoy of wounded, Serbs and Austrians. The Serbs themselves were a mixed lot, for, besides the dominant race, there were Roumanians, Vlachs, Tziganes, Albanians fighting in their army. But the Austrians were even more mixed. They had Magyars (Hungarians), Czechs, Slovenes, Poles, Dalmatians, Croats, Jews, Slovaks, Roumanians, Italians and Austrians proper amongst them. Conversation was a babel. Enquiries as to symptoms almost impossible. The Hungarians were in the worst plight. Most of them could speak no language but their own. The Serbs hated them more than they did the Bulgars, for, rightly or wrongly, it was to the Hungarian troops they attributed the awful massacres, mutilations, violations, which had occurred at Shabatz in N.-W. Serbia during the Austrian advance in September 1914.

It was almost impossible to make any Serb orderly do anything for a Hungarian. They just left them to die. Many of them seemed never to speak from the time they came in until they died. We found eventually it was practically useless to operate on them. They

almost always died afterwards from neglect. Even when we had Austrian orderlies it was much the same —the Czechs, Croats, and Austrians proper seemed to dislike them as much as the Serbs. Czechs and Croats got on quite well with the Serbs. They spoke practically the same language, and were indeed but another branch of the Southern Slav race. Serbian Roumanians from the frontier region around Orsava nearly all could make themselves understood in Serbian, and could act as interpreters for their kinsmen from Transylvania. But they, too, seemed to hate the Magyar. What we saw of these Roumanians we liked. I can still remember one particular case. When I saw him first he was sitting, a wizened little man with furtive eyes, crouched near the stove on a mattress in our Number Three Hospital, wrapped in a dirty sheepskin cape, wearing a dome-shaped sheepskin cap over his wrinkled old face, looking for all the world like the pictures of Robinson Crusoe in schoolboy editions of Defoe. When the others crowded to have their wounds dressed he did not move. Instead he crouched dully nearer the fire apparently unconscious of those around him, though once or twice I caught his beady eye watching me cautiously. I thought he was probably one of the hundreds of cases we were now getting daily labelled "*fatigatio*," men who were too fatigued, too worn out, too footsore, too dispirited to be fit for any further immediate military service, men who were sent back, therefore, though unwounded, quite content to curl up and sleep anywhere where there was food and shelter from the cold, the rain, the mud, safe from the racket of shell fire, away from the sloppy trenches where their feet got frozen, away from the futile marching and counter-marching—nerve-jangled, broken men, such as later became so painfully familiar to us amongst our own troops, under the name of "shell shock."

Thinking he was one of these, I presently forgot him in the interest of my work; and it was probably an hour

later when I was reminded of him again. Apparently, from what one of the orderlies told me afterwards, he had wandered round dumbly, watching the others being dressed, trying to make up his mind whether or no these strange, foreign-looking doctors in unfamiliar uniform, talking a language he did not understand, were to be trusted. By this time he had quietly gravitated to a bench where I was working, and taken his place in the row awaiting treatment. All the while he waited he was very quiet, shifting forward as those in front of him were done, until finally it was his turn. Then from the depths of two or three padded waistcoats he produced his wound—a horrible, shattered shoulder and arm, clotted, caked, suppurating, evidently a shell wound. While I was dressing him he must have suffered excrutiating pain, but his features never altered, and he uttered never a sound. When I had finished he raised his dark eyes a moment to mine.

"*Soutra na savoy*" (To-morrow to be dressed), I said.

He nodded comprehendingly, and shuffled off.

The next day and the next I dressed him, still in silence. By this time I was quite looking forward to seeing "Crusoe," as we called him. He was doing splendidly. For a few days more he came, and then I missed him. He was gone, no one seemed to know where. Perhaps he died in the night—they often did. Perhaps he was sent off in one of the long, dreary troop trains, on a jolting journey of many hours south, with his terribly shattered arm. I cannot say. I hope he pulled through. At any rate I never saw him again.

Another case I can remember about then, was that of an Austrian sergeant, very spick and span for a prisoner. He had a bad compound fracture of the left leg, which I had treated on arrival. The next day, hearing a great commotion and much language in the dressing-room, I went over to find him struggling

violently with two of our orderlies, whilst a Serbian medical student, with a huge pair of scissors, was trying to slit up his beautiful trousers to get at the wound. As soon as he saw me the man ceased struggling, and everyone stood to attention.

"He's a perfect devil, he is, sir. Can't make him understand nohow that we've got to dress him," explained the orderly in an aggrieved tone.

Then I saw what was the matter. He had himself carefully slit his trousers down the seam, fixing the edges with tape. But the medical student, not seeing this, had started to slit them right down the middle of the leg, and it was against this he had been protesting so vigorously. They were his one and only pair; the chances of his ever getting another were distinctly remote; he naturally protested, and equally naturally the Serb student and stolid British orderlies, not knowing a word of German, could make nothing of it.

It was about this time that we got our first peep into the intricacies of Balkan politics. Serbia and Bulgaria were still ostensibly at peace. Ferdinand was still apparently hesitating. But it was known to the Austrian intelligence, about the middle of November, that the Serbs were perilously short of shell, that the French were hurrying large supplies to Salonika, and that some of it was already trickling up the line. Salonika was full of Austrian spies, and naturally every device was being used by them to prevent more getting through until it was too late. They almost succeeded—almost, but not quite. Had they done so, nothing could have prevented the onrush of the Austrian hordes to the Mediterranean, and the whole history of the war might have been different.

On the night of the 30th November, four hundred Bulgarian Komitadgi rushed across the twelve miles from the frontier, surprised the Serb guard at Strumnitza, blew up the bridges, and blocked the one and

only railway line for ten days. How pleased they must have been in Salonika that night.

But they were just three days too late. The shells got through on the 27th, the Serbs turned dramatically on the 29th, and on the day after the line was blocked the Austrians were streaming in disordered retreat over the Danube, about the same time as the wounded Komitadgi, intercepted from Veles, were being brought as prisoners to our hospital. It was our first experience of Bulgarian prisoners, and a very favourable impression they made on us. They were fine, sturdy, simple-minded fellows, very amenable to kindness. We liked them very much.

But they had been unsuccessful through no fault of their own, and naturally, of course, their government denied all knowledge of them, disclaiming all official responsibility for men not in uniform, and hinting delicately to the Chancellaries of Europe that they were really discontented Macedonians, sick of the Serbian yoke, foolishly taking this method of bringing their grievances before the eyes of the Western world.

It was a pretty comedy which no one believed, but which was gravely accepted as official whitewash for an obvious act of war.

No one suffered except the obscure dead on either side, and the unfortunate wounded living.

Apart from things like these, there was much activity at that time in all the Balkan Embassies, and much coming and going of messengers to and from the Foreign Office; for it was hoped to drag the Greeks and Roumanians in on our side, and possibly even the Bulgarians, thus shutting off the Turks from their allies, the Central Powers. On the day after the line was broken, one of these King's Messengers arrived from Bucharest en route for England. It was a most inopportune moment, but he was not in the least perturbed.

"If I can beg, borrow or steal a car, I'll get through via Monastir," he said confidently. "The Serbs say the road is impassable for a motor, and that the Italian Vice-consul went over a precipice with his, some months ago. But I think I can do it. Got any letters you want through?"

I said I had, and would bring them round to the Consulate, where he was stopping, that evening. Accordingly, ten o'clock found me on the doorstep with the Unit's mail. The Consul's kavass, a huge Albanian, red-fezzed, fierce-moustached, baggy-trousered, silent, let me in and took me to the smoke room. There I found the Consul lounging back with a pipe, Professor Morrison, surgeon-in-chief of the Paget Unit, sitting bolt upright, and the Messenger, a wiry, grey-haired man with a merry twinkle, toying with a cigarette on the divan, and telling funny stories of experiences in every capital in Europe from Petrograd to Lisbon.

A few moments before, I had left the hospital with its atmosphere of fug and wounds and crumpled unwashed bodies, its dying and its dead. Now, as if transported on a magic carpet, I seemed suddenly to have fallen into the smoke room of a St. James' Street Club with all its associated amenities; and I could almost feel my mind unwrinkling, expanding, as, sunk in an easy chair, I lay back silent, smoking, taking it all in.

A large shaded lamp on a Turkish table inlaid with mother of pearl, placed in the centre of the room, cast a warm, subdued light over everyone and everything, glinted on the damascened barrels of rifles and crossed scimitars, played over the bookshelves, half lit half hid the hanging tapestries and embroideries on the walls, glowed over priceless rugs from the depths of Asia Minor on the floor. Every now and then the kavass would slip quietly in, replenish the slow-combustion stove with wood, and as silently slip away again.

The talk drifted lightly, irrelevantly, as good talk

should, from subject to subject. Reminiscences of Oxford jumbled with those of Trebizond, Aldershot and Crete. We talked of the Golden Horn, and the glories of Brussa, of the Bektashi, and the Corps of the Janissaries, of memorial brasses and Sussex church architecture, of the Paleologi and the present Greek Royal family, of bargaining for carpets in Damascus, and the martyrdom of St. Basil, of Zionism, sacramental wines and the Daibutzu at Kamakura, of the relative advantages of life under the Turks and the Serbs, of any and everything, except, I think, the great war in which we were all taking some more or less inconspicuous part.

It struck twelve. Professor Morrison had left an hour before, but still the talk went on, neither the Consul nor the King's Messenger showing any signs of wanting to turn in. I had been up since six-thirty that morning, done three major operations before lunch, and worked all the afternoon and evening until dinner. My eyes could hardly keep open any longer. But the thought of going out into the raw night, walking to my cold soldiers' quarters, and getting off my clothes made me desperately loth to move. Finally, however, I had to make a supreme effort to get up. It was 1 a.m. But although the Messenger was due to start for Salonika at 6 a.m., I left them still talking.

Of course the next day's hospital work was a particularly heavy one—The Little Red Woman developed a high temperature, and Sherlock ordered her to bed at once, much against her will, fearing that she had got Relapsing Fever. It turned out to be merely a hospital sore throat, and she was about in a day or two. But in the meanwhile we felt her loss immensely, especially as our No. 3 Hospital was full up, and Sherlock had more to do than was humanly possible.

By this time we had got rid of most of our "voluntary helpers"; but our bolnitchers, unfortunately, we could not dispense with so easily, though they were a constant source of annoyance. One man we found

using the Hospital's glycerine as hair oil, and promptly dismissed. Another had managed, somehow, to get a supply of opium pills, and these he doled out indiscriminately to any patient who would buy them. Him we had court-martialled. Aspirin and Tannogen were hawked round, but we never caught the vendors red-handed. Permanganate of Potash, of which the supply was very scanty, was systematically stolen, until we had a special locker made which could be padlocked. Petty annoyances of this nature kept cropping up constantly, and gradually we became philosophic about them. Somehow or other the work went on.

CHAPTER V

WAR SURGERY

Starting an operating theatre—The Russian dance in the Night Watches—The battle of Kumanovo and the Consul's dilemma—Greeks and Bulgars—The wise behaviour of a donkey—How we discovered the patisserie—The firing of Ike—John the leg-holder—Up against small-pox—Trouble with the "Little Red Woman"—The shadow of Typhus—Serbian funeral rites—The joy of Mail Day.

DECEMBER the First was a red-letter day in our calendar, for on that date we started a real operating theatre—the theatre for which, ever since our arrival, our Chief had been working. How he managed it I do not know, for our entire surgical equipment was comprised in the two regulation field panniers, authorised for a Regimental M.O., and though these are marvels of ingenuity and completeness they certainly are not enough for a Stationary Hospital of one thousand beds such as we were now running.

Considerable additions had therefore to be improvised; and it was here the Chief really did well. Right from the beginning he had set his heart on having a fit place in which to operate; and he spent the first few weeks thinking out plans, finding material, inventing substitutes, striving to get things done against the inertia of Serb officialdom brought up on the traditional Turkish attitude of bland passive resistance to everything new.

First of all, after a lot of difficulty, and by turning out some very indignant official from his office, he secured an excellent room with a good top light in the administrative block close to all three hospitals, with

another room as an observation ward close by. This latter was left as it was; but the former was cleaned, disinfected, painted white and floored with linoleum. From somewhere or other, our Commandant, Major Suskalovitch, managed to unearth a real operating table. So far so good. Then came the question of light, for evening and emergency night work. The so-called electric light of the town was a miserable mockery. The current was constantly failing at the power station. This obviously was useless. Hunting in the bazaar with Ike, however, the Chief came across a Jew who had an incandescent petrol lamp which could be made to work. Some sort of a bargain was struck, the man came and fitted it up for approval, and then when we declared it satisfactory sprang an exorbitant price on it, thinking it was indispensible to us, as indeed it was. At the time we thought it was a plant between our Ike and the Jew. At any rate the Chief was furiously angry, and just kicked the man out, bag and baggage. Then Ike discovered the man had made a mistake. It was another lamp he was thinking about, etc., etc., etc. Eventually we got it at a fairly reasonable price, and thus ended the episode. But it was a black mark against Ike in our Chief's mind, which I think was never erased.

By now the theatre was nearly complete, but we had no steriliser. Great, therefore, was our joy when one day even that appeared. It looked all right, only it wasn't. We never could get up enough pressure to dry-steam our dressings. Everything came out wet and clammy, and we were unable to wear the moist overalls or trust the sterility of the dressings. Thinking it over, however, we came to the conclusion that this after all was a secondary matter. It would have been impossible to do aseptic surgery in any case, and the necessity of using antiseptic methods was probably an advantage in the end.

At any rate we had a theatre which really looked like

a theatre; and here the Chief, Barclay and I spent two happy months very busily until the great blight came. I can still remember with some amusement how, on our first day, the Chief, Barclay and I all felt we must operate at once on certain urgent cases that had been waiting, totally forgetting that the hospital had to go on, and we could not all three be away on one day. Of course, we soon settled down to a routine of alternate operating times; and so the situation worked itself out.

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Can you, with memories of the feverish jazzing mania of 1917-18 still sharp in your mind, when the "flapper" reigned supreme, and she and the "one-pipper," home on short leave, careless of to-morrow, took possession of the restaurants—can you think back to the grimness of 1914-15, when the first shock of the great conflict was on us, when we gave up tennis and golf, dances and theatres, wore long faces, and talked earnestly of patriotism and the purifying influence of war?

If you can, you will appreciate my feelings on the night after our theatre was started. I was orderly officer that day, and it was my duty to make a late round to see all the operation cases before turning in.

It was cold and wet, silent and very dark, so that walking out of our lighted quarters down the sodden path that led through our garden to the hospital, I nearly collided with the pump before my eyes got accustomed to the darkness. Overhead was a vague scurry of clouds, with here and there a pale star peeping out. To the right the dark windows of the closed Austrian Consulate stared blankly. But on the left, bright lights streaming from the windows of the Russian Consulate cast broad paths across the bottom of the garden, and a sudden burst of Tzigane music from an open window, light trills of women's laughter, the confused sound of tapping feet, spurs, and the *frou-frou* of silk told that a dance was going on.

It took me completely by surprise. I felt suddenly chilled, heart-sick. The lightness of it all—the silver plate—the thick red carpet on the stairs—the polished floor—the wine and laughter—the blue and gold uniforms—it all seemed so ghastly within ten yards of the grim, silent hospital across the way. Looking back on it now, I recognise the foolishness of the feeling. One has a right to every legitimate joy. Laughter in the face of death is a fair thing. The men there, some of the women too, had already faced the grim spectre, and were prepared with steady eyes to face it again—their after history proved it.

On a half-lit balcony I saw a tall man in shadow bending over someone slender in white, the gold of his right epaulette catching a glint as the curtain swayed. There was youth, romance, the light that never was—. I should have seen it, but I didn't.

Outside in the road a sentinel, wrapped in his brown cloak, the hood like a monk's cowl well over his ears, rifle at shoulder, fixed bayonet glinting dull grey, slouched past the gateway on his sandalled feet. At the sound of my tread on the gravel he swung half right.

"*Dobro vetche*," I called out softly.

"*Dobro vetche, gospodin doktor*," he answered, recognising me and tramping on.

Under the archway a side-door led into the hospital, and through this I slipped quietly into the cavernous interior. A charcoal brazier, glowing dull red inside the door, half-lit the stooping figure of the sentry holding his hands over it for warmth. Beyond him was a feeble circle of radiance, on whose periphery the line of stretchers holding the daily dead, wrapped in sheets, just showed. Mechanically I counted eight, and wondered vaguely whom they were, so quiet, so very still. As I paused the faint strains of a new commencing waltz came through the half-closed door, and the eyes of the sentry showed glistening white, as his

head turned slowly in the red radiance, listening. He had taken no notice when I came into the building, and now he equally ignored me when I closed the door abruptly, and turned, flashlight in hand, to climb the wooden staircase at the end.

On the first floor everyone was asleep, every window was shut, and the hot vitiated air of three hundred breathing men caught at my throat with a physical nausea. On the second floor the night orderly met me at the stair-head, and whispered that there was a man with a fractured femur who was threatening secondary hemorrhage. Together we moved through the rows of sleeping men, curled up in every position. A few blinked feverishly in the light of the orderly's lamp, and held out thin hands for something, I knew not what. A few sat smoking round a stove half-way down the ward.

Over in the corner of row D a man lay dying. A burning candle had been placed alongside his bed, as was the Serbian custom, in order that the soul of the departing might have a light to guide it on its transit from the worn-out earthly tabernacle to the gates of the Celestial City.

It is a custom older than Christianity, and oddly enough seemed to make the other patients happier. They had all seen death so often close at hand that for them there was no fear left. Some of them, maimed yet recovering, I thought, almost envied their fellow who was dying. I looked at the pale face in the candle-light. The hollow eyes stared dully towards the roof. The feeble pulse fluttered threadily. His hands felt like ice.

"I have given him some cognac, sir," said the orderly. "I wish there was some way of getting beef-tea or hot milk, but there doesn't seem to be."

Of course I knew all that, and the apparent impossibility of altering things. No food was given out between 6 p.m. and 7 a.m. It was not the custom, and try as we could it was not possible to arrange it other-

wise at first. Indeed, if we had had beef-tea there was no way of heating it. There were no hot bottles to place around the patients' limbs, no feeding cups, nothing. I would have given almost everything I possessed at that time to have had half-a-dozen clean English nurses, but it would have been like crying for the moon. We must have lost hundreds of cases simply from lack of nursing and the most elementary hospital appliances. And yet from the Serbian standpoint we were doing excellently well. These were the exigencies of war. They were accustomed to nothing better. And, as our Commandant, Major Suskalovitch, pointed out, even with all our handicaps we were able to pass seven thousand through our hospital in two and a half months, of whom over two thousand were pronounced fit for the firing line again. Our death-rate, too, was under ten per cent.; and the vast majority of our 600-700 deaths were compound fractured femurs, who would never again have been able to fight for the Fatherland, but instead would have been a constant handicap on their families had they survived.

It was a cold-blooded way of looking at things; but in a great war, whose end no one could see, it was a very practical one. At the time it struck me as inhuman. I was new to it all. But our white-haired, benevolent old Major, who had been through four campaigns, though full of the milk of human kindness, believed that the sick and wounded were nothing more than an incubus, that the sole duty of the military surgeon was to get them out of the way of manœuvring troops, patch up and return as many as possible to the firing line, and relegate the rest to be looked after in places as remote from the scene of hostilities as could be made convenient.

Looking back now after five years of it, I recognise that his views, though incomplete, contained a large element of truth.

What he had forgotten, or never appreciated, was

that the first duty of the military medical officer is to prevent disease in the fighting line, for disease has always killed more than wounds in every campaign up to the present. We lost ninety thousand men from disease in the South African War, and twenty thousand from wounds. It has been the prevention of disease that has marked out this war from every other. Millions of men have been saved by it who would otherwise have died. If the Serbs had been able to grasp this, it is probable their country never would have been overrun; and certainly they would have been saved from one of the most ghastly epidemics in history. In the light of later knowledge, however, one can not really blame them for this, when one remembers that they had just emerged exhausted from two wars, the Turkish of 1912, the Bulgarian of 1913, and had less than four hundred doctors when the third and greatest took them totally unprepared.

Coming out from the hospital after I had seen my operation cases, I found that the wind had fallen and a flicker of snow was beginning to powder the ground. A desire to escape for a little from the smell of antiseptics, a nostalgia for the normalities of social life assailed me suddenly. I hated going back to my quarters; and so, turning to the right I walked the few yards that brought me to the British Consulate, sure of a welcome—for it seems the understood thing that our Consuls in the " out places " should play host to any wandering Briton with decent credentials.

I found the Consul in his warm, comfortable smoking room with another of the frequent coming and going King's Messengers. Curiously enough, as I quietly effaced myself on the divan, I found them talking of this apparently widespread faith in the protection and hospitality of the British flag.

" You remember the battle of Kumanovo in 1912," said the Consul. " It was the defeat of the Turks there that gave Northern Macedonia to the Serbs. It's

twenty miles from here, and I remember it well, for I had exactly two hundred and twenty people claiming protection in this house after it. They just flowed in and squatted. They drove me out of every room except the bathroom. The Turks lost their heads completely after their defeat."

"Why didn't they hold the Tzarnagora, and attempt to defend the Vardar?" said the Messenger, with a soldier's professional interest.

"Dunno. They fought quite well at first, and then suddenly panicked. Their army streaked through here like lightning, making for Salonika and safety. The Serbs might have walked straight in and captured the place the same day, for Uskub is, as everyone knows, the key to Macedonia. They never thought for a moment the Turks wound abandon it without a struggle, for naturally its fall cut off the retreat of the army defending the Sanjak of Novibazar from Mitrovitza. Of course they expected to have to fight for it, and advanced slowly throwing out vedettes. It was an unholy time. For two days there was nothing but mob law, and the Albanians looted wealthy Turkish houses with impunity. It was that that filled my bachelor quarters to overflowing with terrified veiled females, clutching their jewellery."

For a moment he paused to light a pipe filled with the awful contraband tobacco of the country, which he smoked and said he liked.

"How did it all end?" I asked.

"Oh. The foreign Consuls got together in a body and went out to meet the Serbs. There were no Turkish officials left to surrender the town, so we did it for them."

The next day we had a fresh convoy from the front; and now that our theatre was in working order the Serbian officials began to give us what they called more serious cases. Instead of wounds of the limbs we began

to get head injuries, gunshot wounds of the chest, and more and more compound fractured femurs. The number of abdominal injuries that passed through our hospital then and afterwards was surprisingly few. I think it was the same at first on most of the fronts before hand-to-hand fighting started and high explosives became common. No doubt a large number of abdominal injuries are immediately fatal, and that may partially account for their scarcity in hospital, but also in modern fighting the abdomen is comparatively sheltered, head and arm injuries being more common in trench warfare. On our front, men lying in the open between rushes were very liable to shrapnel wounds in the back, and even in rapid advances it was generally the lower limbs that suffered, owing to the low trajectory of modern rifles fired by men in trenches. Indeed, most of our abdominal cases were bayonet wounds which had not proved immediately fatal.

Talking it over with our white-haired old Commandant, I remember him saying that one of the things that struck him, after Kumanovo, was the high proportion of gunshot wounds of the abdomen amongst the Turkish prisoners.

"The Turk," he said, "is a very brave man, but he was not properly trained in the first Balkan War. He fought standing up. He did not know how to take cover. We defeated him, but he is still a very brave man, and the Schwab (German) has taught him. I do not despise the Turk as I do the miserable Greek."

"You do not like the Greek, Major?"

"The Greek! No. He is a friend, he says, but I doubt it. The Greek is cunning. He fights with his tongue. He says he is our friend, but was it not Vergilius who said: '*Timeo Danaos et dona ferentes?*' The Greek. No."

"And the Bulgar, Major?"

"Ah, the Bulgar! We hate the Bulgar. The Bulgar hates us. It is so. It has always been so. It

always will be so. We are natural enemies. There is no room in the Balkans for a greater Serbia, and a greater Bulgaria. The Tzar himself has said it. You people of the West, you say 'be friends.' But you do not understand. It is impossible. The Bulgar is a brave man. We do not despise him as we do the Greek. But we do not fear him. No."

This conversation, you will remember, was in December 1914. The old man smiled at me, we saluted mutually, and he went upstairs to see the Little Red Woman, who was still on the sick list, and was waiting impatiently for his leave to get up again.

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That day we had a very heavy programme, both in the theatre and in the hospital. The patients seemed to be endless. We were almost at our wits' ends. The Matron of the Paget Unit came round to see our work. Even though she was an old hospital sister of mine, I could give her only an occasional word, time was so precious. They came to tell me that one of the new admissions was dying. I looked at the endless waiting queue and tore myself away. Miss Rowntree, the Matron, accompanied me down the dirty ward, littered with the refuse of two or three days, picking her steps with raised skirts.

"But this is awful," she said. "None of these beds seem ever to have been made."

"They haven't," I answered. "We have no sheets to put on them, and no nightshirts to change the men out of their dirty uniforms. I wish I had you and twenty nurses."

"But why didn't the Red Cross people give you nurses?"

"Oh, us. They sent us out as a Field Unit. It's not the fault of the Red Cross that we've been turned into a Stationary Hospital, that we've got more patients on this floor than you have in your entire hospital with

your seventy nurses and orderlies. It's just our luck," I said, rather peevish from overwork.

"I wonder if they would let me give you a hand," she said thoughtfully.

That made me feel ashamed. Women, particularly nurses, are rather wonderful people. I was sorry I had seemed to complain. We really were enjoying it in a way.

"Oh, you. You've got your own work to do; and we can manage all right in a Serbian way. Don't bother about us."

"Still—" she said thoughtfully.

The patient, a wounded Serb, shot through the right lung, was at the far end of the ward. They had put a lighted taper in his hand—the last attention to the dying. The wound of entry in his chest had closed, but the opening in the lung was allowing air to escape between the broken ribs underneath the skin of the chest wall, and every time he breathed more and more air escaped, spreading upwards and downwards over his body, so that when we saw him he was like an advertisement of Michelin tyres.

Everywhere we touched him his skin crackled like brown paper. The air had spread up his neck on to his face, burying his mouth and eyes. His chest was enormous, his abdomen like a great balloon. He looked as if he could almost float off. He was, in fact, the most extreme case of "surgical emphysema" I have ever seen. But his pulse, breathing, and temperature were all quite good. I therefore sent for the interpreter and bade him tell the man he was in no immediate danger of dying, and might dispense with his candle. Everyone around was shocked. No one would believe me. But they were most polite about it. In deference to me they removed the candle—at least while I was there. As a matter of fact he did recover. I operated on him for an empyema later, and he was one of the most grateful patients I ever had.

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When Sister Rowntree left us that evening, she reiterated her wish to help us; and, remembering what a first-class theatre sister she was, I suggested she might get leave to help us occasionally in the afternoons at our operations. But plans, like eggs, have a habit of failing to hatch. The next day we heard she was down with Relapsing Fever, so for the time we had to struggle on alone, with the consequence that our two theatre orderlies got overworked, and finally both went sick with Relapsing Fever also.

Half our unit had it by this time; and, in addition, the hospital work seemed more and more unending. We worked all day, and still there were people to dress. The operation cases needed more and more attention as they increased in number. When we cleared the Dressing Room and went down the wards to look at something, we found on our return that in some mysterious way the room had filled up again. Even with three hospitals on our hands, with a thousand beds and fifteen hundred patients in them, it seemed to us we must be doing more.

It was quite accidentally we discovered the reason. There were fourteen inns—so-called Hotels—in the town, and these the authorities had filled with "Ambulatory cases," men with gunshot wounds of arms, shoulders, hands. Theoretically the men in these should have been distributed over all the hospitals in the town. Practically, they all came to us, because, we discovered, the hospitals manned by Greek and other foreign doctors closed down at three in the afternoon. For a day or so we said nothing. Then, more wounded coming in, the Cinema House was commandeered, a thousand packed into it, and we were asked to take charge. That did us.

We had already been working seven days a week for four weeks, from 9 a.m. to 8 p.m. daily; six of the unit were now down with Relapsing Fever, and the rest were on the verge of exhaustion.

We knew that the Serb and Russian doctors were also working at full pressure, but most of the foreign doctors in Serbian pay were, comparatively speaking, merely marking time.

We felt that what was needed was a re-distribution of work, that we had been overloaded simply because we were near the station, and it was fatally easy to dump cases on us.

And so, when they asked us to take over the Cinema as well, we struck. We said we would carry on our three hospitals, and dress extra cases up to 7 p.m. More we could not do. Even this was an impossible task—four doctors and six orderlies to run a show nearly twice as large as the London Hospital—but in war one does impossible things.

It was a Saturday when things came to this climax. For a wonder no ambulance train had come in that day. And to celebrate this we decided that two doctors and four orderlies should have the Sunday afternoon off, whilst the rest carried on in their absence.

Lots were drawn for this our first half holiday, and it was with quite astonishing pleasure I found that Barclay and I were the favoured ones. We were free for four long, glorious hours. It was like being a schoolboy again.

Uskub lies at the apex of a broad triangular plain bounded on the north-east and north-west by mountains, open towards the south. Through this plain flows the Vardar. The town itself lies close to the north-western mountain chain, and day by day we had looked at Gornovaldo, the mountain opposite us, watched the snow creeping lower and lower, and felt the desire to climb up into the purity of it all grow more and more insistent. So when Barclay and I started off that afternoon we made for the mountain instinctively.

A winding path led over the railway amongst the maize fields. It was a sea of mud at first, but we had by now become accustomed to Serbian mud, and

sauntered through it in our high gum boots quite unconcernedly.

Presently we overtook a donkey with a wooden pack-saddle loaded with two full saddle bags, a water gourd, and a large red amphora such as wine is carried in. The amphora was, I think, empty. We judged so because the owner of the donkey, a venerable-looking old peasant, was lying prone in the mud, drunk as a fiddler, the donkey was looking on contemplatively, and two younger men, humorously patient, were trying to get the ancient gentleman on his feet again.

The donkey evidently was used to the vagaries of its owner, for every time he staggered on a few steps it followed. When he fell it cocked one ear, looked at him sideways and stopped. When he regained his feet it started once more, completely understanding. The trio and the donkey were progressing at the rate of about half a mile an hour, making evidently for one of the two villages perched precipitously on the mountain side. We left them at it.

As we progressed the road grew steeper, rough rolling stones now took the place of mud, and the track grew more and more winding. Hooded men, sandalled, wrapped in heavy sheepskin coats passed us occasionally, coming down. Some of them had donkeys, and strode alone. Others came in groups of two or three with an occasional woman. But all of them were armed with a slung rifle, and each of them scrutinized us sharply as he passed, for we were in unsettled country as soon as we left the shelter of the town; bands of roving "Komitadgi," Bulgar, Serb, Albanian, were constantly on the move in this area, and it behoved each man to be prepared to meet an enemy at any turn of the road.

A mist had all the while been creeping over the mountain side, and soon we found it was impossible to see for more than twenty yards. Ghostly figures appeared suddenly out of the gloom, the winding turns

became more and more confusing, and once or twice we wandered completely off the track. Occasionally the tinkle of a sheep bell told that a flock was near.

Quite suddenly we tumbled on a square building which we had previously seen with glasses from the town, and had been told was an old Turkish magazine. A hoarse challenge rang out. We heard the click of a rifle.

"Friends. English doctors," we called out hurriedly in Serbian. A sentry, quickly followed by another, now loomed up dimly enormous. We stood quite still, and they approached us cautiously. Apparently what they saw satisfied them, for they came to the salute, turned and disappeared.

"I think," said Barclay, quietly, "we'd better get back. We might strike another sentry not so amenable."

But it was much darker now. We found the track very difficult to see. The turns looked different somehow. Still, we knew, if we kept on descending we must strike the railway line to Mitrovitza somewhere. We did reach it eventually; but before doing so we nearly collided with a stationary object in the middle of the road. It was our old friend the donkey, still sticking close to its inebriated owner, who, now deserted by his companions, had got about a mile further on his way home.

Arriving at our headquarters, tired, happy, but very hungry, we found to our surprise that the others had already stopped work—a strike amongst the women bandage rollers having made dressing after four o'clock impossible—and Stretton, Steve, Sherlock and the Little Red Woman accordingly were seated round the stove in the Salon talking shop before tea.

There was a brown paper parcel on the table close to the lamp.

"Say, I give you three guesses what's in that," said Steve, excitedly.

"Give it up," I answered promptly. I always give things up. It is an invariable principle of mine not to anticipate.

"Well. I've made a discovery—some discovery. Why, there's actually a candy shop in this one-horse town."

"What?" I said, incredulously.

"Sure thing. D'ye know, Father, the fellow actually makes cakes and jam, and sells chocolate. His pastries are right bang-up confectionery. I've got some mighty good-looking samples in that parcel waiting for Charlie to say tea is ready."

Looking back on it now it all seems so trivial, but I can still remember how excitedly pleased we were at the discovery, for it was a matter of real first-class importance to us.

To be deprived of jam and butter, and the other small amenities of life, may seem of no importance to those who have never experienced the lack of them. In the presence of the greater discomforts of campaigning it may seem absurd. But in reality it is not so, for there is nothing one misses so much on active service as the minor comforts; and under such conditions one's appetite for sweet things becomes as eager and unspoiled as that of a child.

When we discovered, therefore, that there was a patisserie in the town, in the main street, not ten minutes' walk from us, it was as if someone had left us a gold mine.

In the course of the next few days every one of us, I think, paid a visit to it, and came back laden with chocolates, preserved fruits, biscuits—things which in ordinary life we would never have thought of buying at home. The little Greek proprietor soon got to know us all by sight, and with the adaptability of his race took

the trouble to learn sufficient English to greet us, figure out our bills, and thank us on our departure.

The discovery, trivial as it may seem, added enormously to our comfort, made us much more good tempered, brightened our outlook on life in the most absurd manner.

There is, when you come to think of it, an entire volume on psychology in the explanation of this.

All during the next week we were inundated with refugees, the flotsam and jetsam of the civilian population sent back from the devastated areas, south of the Danube, as they were cleared of the retreating Austrians. They came as fast as the congested single line from Nish would allow. Every night, about eight, a long packed train would arrive full of these refugees, with pitiful small bundles containing all they had been able to save from the wreck of their homes. Ike, our interpreter, had left his "woman," as he called her, in Belgrade. He was very anxious, therefore, to find out whether she was one of them, and each night he searched the train diligently, always to return unsuccessful.

"What luck, Ike?" I said one evening.

"My woman has not come," he answered, gloomily.

"It must make you very anxious."

He stared at me with his piercing brown eyes.

"You bet. I want to know if she's dead."

"But why?" I said, rather surprised at his tone.

"Because if she is I'd like to get another," he answered unexpectedly.

How much, or what he really meant by the remark, I could not then or afterwards determine, for he had a queer twisted sense of humour peculiarly his own.

In his way he was a most remarkable man. His vitality was immense. It was quite impossible to repress him. Considering that he was an Austrian

suspect, the way he stood up to the Serbian officials was remarkable. The power he soon acquired over our personnel, too, was quite striking. Charlie, our fat Maltese cook, was a child in his hands. The "White Rabbit," our second interpreter, was palpably afraid of him. Franz, our smiling soldier servant, hated the very sight of him. None of us liked him, but we found him indispensible. If we wanted anything, he got it when everyone else failed. We distrusted him profoundly, and yet we had to trust him. He was a splendid interpreter, but he had a way of domineering over patients that made us use him as little as possible, for it was not pleasing to see him hectoring men who had been broken fighting for their country against the nation to which he belonged.

The mistake he made eventually was due to a misconception of the character of the Scot. Because our Chief was a slow-thinking man he thought he could take liberties with him. He had not grasped the fact that these slow Scotsmen, when they have made up their minds, have a way of acting with explosive energy, especially when goaded by the feeling that the more quick-witted person is trying to take an advantage.

There comes a period when even an indispensible man must be got rid of. What he did, we never troubled to enquire. But there was a row; he went out that night taking the cook with him; and they both got gloriously tight. Next morning he was fired. Then he disappeared from our ken for a space. How much he managed to loot from us we never found out. We did hear that he had stripped several of the prisoners of war, representing that he was a Red Cross worker under us, and so inducing them to entrust their jealously-guarded valuables to him for safe keeping.

What he did, how he managed to exist subsequently, was a matter of speculation to us for months afterwards. He left a mark on all our memories. None of us

thought we had done with him finally. We all felt we should have to deal with him again sooner or later.

The man we got immediately afterwards was a failure. He was a Dalmatian and so technically an Austrian subject, had learnt his English in America, and was quite a competent interpreter. But he had a habit of going over to the mess when we were out, and of wandering casually into our quarters, giving some ostensible message when he found them occupied, that was rather puzzling. Then we began to miss things. Eventually his history came to our ears. He was a well-known thief. Then he disappeared, taking Sherlock's English passport with him, much to the perturbation of the British Consul. Probably the man was an Austrian spy. How he got out of the country, and what use he made of the stolen passport we never learnt.

By this time our operating theatre was working smoothly. Sister Rowntree had recovered from Relapsing Fever, and got permission to come to our aid in the afternoons. We had engaged a gaunt Austrian woman to wash and boil and clean up generally for us.

And then we discovered John.

John was an Austrian prisoner, a fat good-natured kindly person of some forty-five summers, who had been a rural postman before the war. Life had dealt kindly with John, he was contented, happily married; he had a safe, fixed job with a pension at the end of it. There was not a cloud on his horizon.

And then suddenly Fate had clutched him, dragged him from his quiet little village in Bohemia, hurried him breathlessly with thousands more of his grey-coated comrades across the Danube, passed him through a hell of shrapnel, lost him in the mountains, and finally dumped him a bewildered prisoner in Uskub, a place he had never heard of before.

In his sloppy grey uniform he looked even more harmless than if he had been in civilian clothes.

Stretton. Sister. The Little Red Woman. Barclay.

Plate IV. Our Theatre (page 102).

Later, when he came to know us better and had ceased to be afraid, he showed me with great pride a photo of himself in a frock coat and top hat, seated on a cork-wood property couch beside an uninviting-looking female, his wife, and two fat-legged little girls, his daughters. He was a Czech, spoke German very badly, had not the remotest idea what the war was about, and wanted to go home.

His immediate job, however, was to scrub and polish the theatre floor; and, clad in a white coat, standing at a safe distance from the operator, to hold the ends of arms and legs while we amputated.

Although he knew no English we always told him what to do in that language, accompanied by pantomime. The pantomime he recognised intelligently, and after a while began to associate it with the words, much as an intelligent terrier might.

When not otherwise engaged, he helped the gaunt Austrian woman with the washing of towels and sheets, kept the stove supplied with fuel, and pumped up the pressure in the petrol incandescent light over the operating table.

We developed a great liking for John. He was always willing, always or nearly always smiling, always anxious to please. I fancy he hated the work, especially having to hold the legs while we amputated; but he never confessed it until the great plague came that stopped our activities, and he was transferred to yet another post.

We got him on my first operating week, purely on trial. He stayed with us until the end, taking the place of our dresser, Stubbs, a medical student, who became ill about a fortnight after we started.

Stubbs' illness was one of our first real troubles. One of the orderlies had just begun peeling from Scarletina, when Stubbs developed a pink rash. But the rash was not typical, he had no temperature, and his throat was not sore. We watched him for two days whilst the rash

faded. Then papular spots began to appear on his wrists and forehead.

Sherlock, who was looking after him, came to me.

"I wish you'd have a look at Stubbs," he said.

We examined him together, getting more and more grave.

"Well. What do you think?" he asked.

"Same as you," I answered.

"Then you think it is," he said.

"Sure of it. I was through the London epidemic of 1902."

"But how could he have caught it? I have no case in hospital," he said.

"Well. You will soon," I answered cheerfully.

Then we went and told the Chief that we had a case of smallpox amongst our men.

We had already had Scarlet and Relapsing Fever. This was our third zymotic disease; so it seemed to us that for a small unit we were suffering pretty severely already from our insanitary hospital. Luckily, we did not know what was in store for us.

Obviously the first move was to isolate the patient, the next to vaccinate all contacts—in other words, the whole unit. There was a single-roomed porter's lodge at the entrance gate to our quarters. It was empty, kept so, indeed, in case of any such emergency. By putting in a bed and bedding, a table, a rug and a stove, it was turned into an isolation ward, and the patient installed within an hour. To prevent spread, orders were issued that no one except Sherlock was to visit the patient. Then we were all vaccinated with some lymph supplied from Nish, and everyone was happy again. The vaccine probably was quite inert, for none of us took; but by the time we discovered this we did not care, for in a fortnight we had begun to accept smallpox as an everyday occurrence. In Serbia we soon discovered nobody bothered much about it. The Major,

our Commandant, was gently amused at all the fuss we made at first.

The Little Red Woman, too, in spite of her training was quite surprised at our precautions. In her warm-hearted, impulsive way, as soon as she heard of the case she made straight for the gate-house; and there Sherlock found her talking to the patient, standing close to the bed in her ordinary clothes.

"But you mustn't do that," he protested.

"Why should I not? The boy will be lonely. I am not afraid of small-pox," she said quickly, throwing up her red head.

"But you may carry it all round the mess," he said.

"Oh, if you are afraid," she answered hotly, "I needn't come to the mess."

"It's not a question of being afraid. It's a question of common sense," he answered, getting nettled.

"Well. I don't care. I'm not going to leave the boy without attention," she cried impulsively.

"But I'm looking after him," said Sherlock in an irritated voice, "and one person in contact is enough. You're only adding to the risk."

"I don't care," she repeated stubbornly. "I'm coming to see him."

Sherlock repeated all this to Barclay, Steve and myself; and we were sitting round the stove, smoking and considering what we should do when she came in. She glanced at us all quickly.

"You look like conspirators. And you're all angry with me. But I don't care," she said.

Then I had an inspiration.

"It's superfluous having two doctors looking after one case. Suppose we put you in charge," I said quickly. "You could both doctor and nurse him. Sherlock won't mind. Do you agree?"

"Certainly," she answered promptly.

"Righto, then that's done! You take over from six o'clock to-night. We'll have a couch put into the gate-

house for you; and you'll consider yourself contagious. No hospital work. No coming to the mess. Food sent in for both of you to the gate-house. You understand?"

"Certainly," she said, and went off triumphantly.

Steve smiled a slow, sweet smile at me.

"Say, Father. I get you. That's some wheeze. She thinks she's won," he drawled.

"She's a perfect dear. She's all impulse. I give her two days to get tired of it. Then Sherlock can take on again, and she won't bother till the next time," I answered.

As a matter of fact thirty-six hours finished her. The patient was exceedingly tiresome, like most fever patients. He kept her awake most of the night, and wanted her to talk to him all day. She was unaccustomed to nursing, and it came as a surprise to her the number of things he expected her to do for him. Then, too, she missed the hospital. Finally the Major came along and worried her conscience. He said it was ridiculous to use up the energies intended for a hundred patients on one case, that any good bolnitcher could do the work she was doing, and that he knew a man just recovered from small-pox who would be quite willing to act as male nurse for ten dinars a week.

That finished her. She was back on duty within the two days we had given her. Sherlock took charge; and no one ever mentioned the matter to her afterwards. But I think she knew, for she never suggested going to see that patient again, and he was allowed to convalesce alone, aided by the diurnal visits of Sherlock, and the ministrations of the Serbian bolnitcher, who could speak no English. None of the rest of the unit contracted the disease; but by now we began to have three or four cases a day in our hospital. Generally they were quite ordinary cases, but when anything special or doubtful occurred one or the other of us was called in. I remember one such case well.

Sherlock found him on his afternoon round, and in the evening brought me to see him.

"That's his bed," said Sherlock, and the bolnitcher, at the words poked the wrapped-up bundle.

"No. I'm wrong," he said, when he saw the uncovered face. "That's a Recurrent Fever. Try the man two up."

The man two up proved to be a diphtheria, that ought to have been removed to the Fever Hospital that afternoon.

"I'm afraid I've lost him," said Sherlock. "Let's look further along."

The patients were lying on straw mattresses on the floor, so close packed that the mattresses touched. Each of them was wrapped in a dark military blanket, mostly drawn over his head; and we picked our way between the narrow rows by the aid of the feeble oil lamp carried by the bolnitcher, still looking for our particular case.

Suddenly a man between two others stirred, sat up with wild, staring eyes, and began to jabber at us, waving his arms like the conductor of an orchestra.

"That's him," said Sherlock. "I knew he was somewhere about here."

At a word from the bolnitcher the man leapt up erect in bed, throwing aside his blanket and exposing his whole body.

"Isn't he a beautiful specimen," said Sherlock, with the impersonal satisfaction of the scientist. "He's the finest example of confluent malignant small-pox I've ever seen."

"He certainly is typical," I admitted. "What a pity it is you can't keep him. He'll be dead in a week in that horrible fever hospital, 'The Polymesis.'"

"Yes, I know," he answered, his face falling. "I went there the other day. They've got Recurrent Fever, Typhoid, Small-pox, Diphtheria all mixed up on

contiguous mattresses. Can't help it, overcrowded just like us, only worse."

"I hear they've got a case of Typhus," he added casually.

Typhus.

The name stirred seared memories in me as nothing else in the way of disease can, carried me back to half-forgotten days of creeping horror, of the lurking fear that comes of knowledge, and the forced courage that has to overcome that fear.

For a moment it brought remembrance of women, young, eager, beautiful, who, knowing what was at stake, had faced the horror with wide, calm eyes, not consciously from any high altruistic motives, certainly not from any hankering after the martyr's crown, nor with the idea of figuring in the limelight before a fascinated world, but simply because they were nurses, hired for the work at two and a half guineas a week, and it never occurred to them to shirk it.

To the English mind, even to that of the English doctor, the name conveys little. The layman usually confuses it with Typhoid (Enteric), a disease which now has lost all its terror. The English doctor knows it only from his reading. He has, almost certainly, never seen a case, and has no inherited dread of it. If he be learned in the history of his art he will have read of it as Camp Fever, Gaol Fever, Irish Fever, Famine Fever, Spotted Fever in his Murchison. The whole subject, however, will be one of historical interest only to him.

But in Ireland it is not so. There the horror still lurks in neglected corners, surviving from the awful times of the Great Famine, breaking out unexpectedly every few years in one locality or another. The Irish peasant, with his long tenacious memory, holds it in deadly fear. Doctors and nurses know that in handling it they take their lives in their hands, fifty per cent. of them get it, twenty per cent. of them die.

The former mystery of its cause, the ignorance of how

it was conveyed, the apparent impossibility of protecting oneself against it added to its horror. There is hardly a doctor in Ireland, coming of a medical stock, who has not had some of his kin of a former generation die of it. It has been a shadow to him from the cradle. Personally, it is the one disease I hate to handle.

When, therefore, Sherlock announced as an interesting fact that a case had been reported, I was conscious of a distinct shock. Knowing the conditions under which we were working, I felt that if it once started in Serbia we were done for. It would spread like wildfire. It would decimate the country. Memories of former epidemics would pale before this one, should it once begin.

"Who told you about this case," I said abruptly.

"The Little Red Woman. We're thinking of going to the Polymesis to have a look. Like to come," he added casually.

"Not I," I answered promptly. "I've seen too much of it in my time to want to see any more."

"Of course, I had forgotten. I remember your book about it, now I come to think of it. Sorry," he said apologetically.

I nodded.

"And if you take my advice—which you won't—you'll leave it alone. It's not your work. Anyhow, whatever you do, don't drag the Little Red Woman into it," I said.

Of course they went. I knew they would. But they came back disappointed. It was not a genuine case, only a typhoid; and I felt enormously relieved.

As it was, we had quite enough trouble on our hands at the time. Most of our unit were getting periodic attacks of Recurrent Fever, and we had no real way of curing them, for it was before the time Salvarsan began to be used with such excellent results in this disease.

To make things worse, just then, Steve got ill. Something went wrong with his eyes. He complained of

intense headache, intolerance of light and sound, and was incapacitated for a week.

As he was an indefatigable worker, his loss was keenly felt; we were all a little overworked, and all of us got ragged tempered. As Steve said, "nearly anything would get our goat," and knowing it we went about avoiding one another.

When he and two of the men recovered, we were all happy again.

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Every morning on our way to the dressing room we used to pass the dead of the night before, laid out in the basement in a stiff row, wrapped each in a blanket, lying on a stretcher with a candle burning at his head.

They were all men from Northern Serbia, and therefore strangers with none to mourn them. Bullock waggons came about ten o'clock, and into these the bodies, in rough deal coffins, covered with a painted wooden cross, were loaded in sixes, one on the top of the other. A long-haired "pope," in gorgeous vestments, strode in front, two ragged soldiers with rifles marched behind, and that was the funeral.

There were no mourners, no carriages. Once they had been men who had fought heroically for their country; but now they were just names in an official list of casualties. They were buried in long trenches in the new, ever-increasing graveyard on the far side of the station beyond the railway lines, each with his little wooden cross.

Coming fresh to the awful callousness of war, we were stirred at first; but soon we grew accustomed. The value of human life sinks enormously in war time. We knew that our own men, our own officers, were being interred just as hurriedly—often more hurriedly—on the Western front; and felt that it spoke well for the administration of the harried country, in which we were, that any formalities were carried out at all.

Plate V.—Bullock wagons coming to the hospital to remove the dead of the night before (p. 110).

It was a few days before Christmas that I noticed the first case of mourning. The dead were lying in the usual grim row on stretchers on the floor. One man, however, had his cap on. There was a sprig of green behind his right ear. A jar of wine, an apple and some grains of wheat lay beside him. A candle, as usual, burned at his head. The body was wrapped in a brilliant patchwork quilt; and beside it a woman, crouching on her knees, her face hidden, sobbed quietly.

We passed her softly on our way upstairs. At lunch time she was still there watching over her dead. When we returned in the afternoon she seemed never to have moved. Next day she was gone, and the body with her. We never knew whom she was, or for whom she mourned—father, brother, son or lover. She crossed our path for a moment, and then slid quietly into the outer unknown again.

But the belief in the resurrection from the dead symbolised by the sprig of green, and grains of wheat which, though buried in the soil, yet rise again and flourish, the material provision for the soul on its lone journey into the void, denoted by the apple and the jar of wine, long lingered in our memories, for we felt that we were looking on customs probably time-worn before Memphis, Thebes, Nineveh were thought of, and certainly centuries before the eclectic faith of the Nazarene had grafted them on the stem of its tradition. It was like a sudden unexpected vision of the ages.

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We had by now been away from England over two months, but not a single letter or newspaper had come through to us, although, as I have already mentioned, the Serbian Post Office was continually sending us letters belonging to other people further up country. All of us had friends whom we knew were certain to write to us at least once a week. Most of us had arranged to have various newspapers sent us. It had

been settled that the British Red Cross should forward on all such correspondence. But nothing came. The silence began to get on our nerves. It looked as if we had been shot out suddenly to this far-off country, and then promptly forgotten.

Stretton was particularly distressed. He was an oldish man, already past military age, had been curtly declined by both the War Office and the Admiralty on the outbreak of war, and really should never have been sent abroad. But nothing else would satisfy him, and he had plagued everyone in authority till finally, by concealing his age, he had persuaded the British Red Cross to accept him.

He had left his practice on two days' notice, wired for a locum he had never seen, said good-bye to his wife and children, and set off with us in a fever of excitement. But week after week of silence began to wear on him.

"God knows what mayn't have happened. My wife writes twice a week. I know she does," he said.

One day he came in foaming. He had been visiting the Paget Unit, and they were getting letters regularly. The same evening we heard that one of our orderlies had got a letter through the Post Office, just dropped into a letter box in the ordinary way in London twelve days before.

We thought of the bundles that must be accumulating at the Headquarters in Pall Mall. The Chief stated that he had wired immediately after arrival asking for our mail to be sent on.

"That puts the tin lid on it," said Steve.

I have wondered sometimes since if that night, by some form of telepathy, the concentrated venom of our irritation reached and made tingle the ears of the good lady who had charge of our correspondence in Pall Mall. Perhaps so. Perhaps it was only the increasing volume of our stuff getting in the way that made her bestir herself. Perhaps she wandered in casually after a matinee.

"Hello. Here's a lot of letters for Serbia. Let me see. Aren't we sending out a Unit there, or has it gone? Let's look when they were received. A week. That's all right. Three weeks—Hem. Five weeks—Good gracious. Seven weeks—How could I have been so careless. Eight weeks—. I daren't look at any more. They must go off at once."

All this is pure imagination. Perhaps there was no painstaking lady in the case. Perhaps only an ordinary stupid male clerk, harassed by too much to do, was to blame. I cannot say. At any rate, one golden afternoon they came.

Mail day.

Only those who have wandered in the outparts can imagine the joy of it. Only those who have had to content their souls in patience can appreciate the cruelty that official indifference can often unconsciously perpetrate.

It was a few days before Christmas when our first consignment arrived. No one could do any work that afternoon. Stretton had a monster sheaf, and was satisfied. I think I had fifteen bundles of letters. Everyone had a mail except Steve. He watched us reading and re-reading, chuckling over special bits, turning over envelopes.

"Believe me, Father, it makes a fellow feel kind of mean to be the only orphan in this outfit. Not that it is any fault of my people," he interjected quickly. "Not on your life. Grandmama thinks her little Willie's safe in Philadelphia. She'll be some startled when she hears of this stunt."

Stretton beamed with content that night.

"My wife says things are all right, and the 'locum' is popular," he confided. "I've written her to send letters direct, though," he added, his eyes hardening.

Naturally we all did the same, and so our letters came, in future, quite regularly fourteen days as a rule after they were posted. But we had not been in time

to stop our Christmas letters going to Headquarters, and they did not arrive in Serbia until March in consequence.

I can still remember going through that pitiful Christmas mail bag—parcels of cigarettes, pipes, mittens, gloves, scarfs, Christmas greetings, chocolate, hard lumps of stuff that was once cake—addressed with the names of men who had been sent home broken in health and spirit, or, worse still, lay quiet in their water-logged Serbian graves. But I anticipate.

CHAPTER VI

CARRYING ON

The man with the haunting eyes—The treatment of Austrian Prisoners—How we discovered James and Anthony—An Austrian Christmas Eve—The Serbian Dead March—How we tried to buy embroideries—Concerning Macedonian costumes, Tzigane women, yashmaks and charchafs—Steve and the olives—The cow-bell and the infatuation of Anthony—The discovery of the "Han"—Ragusan argosies—The real secret of the Macedonian massacres—The arrival of the Suffragettes—The odd behaviour of the commercial traveller—The pitiful tale of how we cursed and finally forgave a Scotsman.

BY this time the first great rush of wounded was over. The Serbs had gained the phenomenal victory over the hated "Schwab," which was the outstanding feature of the Allied campaign up to Christmas, 1914. They had captured seventy thousand men, hundreds of guns, thousands of rifles, millions of small-arm ammunition. It was a veritable debâcle. There was joy and rejoicing all over the land, and the change in the fortune of war showed itself in the changed aspect of the wounded. Everyone was happy.

We were now also beginning to get over some of the difficulties of the language, and cases were no longer being overlooked and left undressed as formerly. The patients remained longer with us, as they were not being evacuated so rapidly to Veles, Ghevgeli, Kalkandelen, Monastir as formerly, the pressure from the front not being so severe. Cases we had operated on were by this time segregated into one quarter, and distinguishing numbers put on their beds, so that we could pick out our own cases and dress them in the ward. That this last arrangement, so ordinary as to be taken for granted in

any hospital, should have been looked upon by us as a great advance, shows how primitive and haphazard our methods had been during the first few nightmare weeks, when even to dress all the cases requiring urgent treatment was impossible.

Order began to rise out of chaos, and we felt that at last we really had a hospital, and not a lodging-house for wounded, to look after.

Our death-rate dropped to an average of 10-12 per diem, and, after we had worked out a diet scheme with the officials, we ceased to have the uncomfortable feeling that patients who could not eat the field ration were being starved.

The Serb peasant is an uncomplaining person. From his infancy he has been accustomed to hard work and poor food—that is, poor from the western standpoint. One square meal a day of bread and meat soup, with a glass of vino (wine) at noon is his staple diet. Tea at six in the morning, tea or boiled rice at six in the evening, with his loaf or half a loaf of black bread, and he is being well fed.

We found that milk as part of the dietary of a wounded man was almost impossible to get. Milk is very little used in the Balkans, apparently. We got it eventually, after much tribulation. Hard-boiled eggs, slabs of toasted bacon, fragments of roasted mutton, chicken or goat, tough buffalo beef were fairly easily obtainable. There seemed to be no demand for vegetables or potatoes, though these were abundant in the local markets. Butter was unobtainable. Jam or preserved fruit was looked upon as a great luxury, though apples, plums, cherries, etc., were grown in the country, and were quite cheap to buy.

As usual, the wounded had an inordinate desire for sweet things, and, as I have mentioned already, there was a regular traffic in ration bread for cakes and other sweetmeats.

Sometimes friends used to bring in supplies of such

delicacies. Sometimes a patriotic Serb, when his "Slava" day came round, would make a tour of the hospital, distributing gifts of this nature. One way or another, most of them seemed to be able to gratify their infantile craving for sweet things.

At that time there was one old man who, for some reason or other, attached himself especially to me. When I say that he was an old man, I mean that he looked old, for we found it very difficult to guess the real ages of these tired, wounded, half-starved men. Nearly always we were twenty or thirty years out. This particular man used to hang about every day, shyly in the background, saying nothing to anyone, shuffling forward when he saw a space, wistfully waiting when more pushful people crowded in front of him. Always when he was anywhere near, his eyes seemed to watch me. Always when I looked up I seemed to catch them. Somehow he got on my conscience. I used to make a special point of dressing him at once as soon as I saw him—just to get rid of his haunting eyes. He was one of our rare cases of abdominal wounds; and all the time he was with us he was gradually getting worse.

One day I asked him if there was anything especial I could do for him, he seemed so lonely, so helpless. It took a long time to make him understand. Then he told me he had no friends, no relations, no money, and what he wanted most of all in life was some lump sugar, but he could not afford it.

I promised to bring him some that afternoon, and he thanked me in a queer, shy, vacant way. Then someone called me off to an operation. I was out of the hospital all the rest of the day and forgot about him entirely.

All that evening I had a troubled feeling that there was something very important I had overlooked; but it was not until the next morning, when I felt his eyes upon me, that I remembered.

I was horribly ashamed. In the middle of my work

I went back to the mess, told Charlie I wanted some lump sugar, got it, and returned.

I think he was much worse that day. He took the sugar languidly. Then, after I had dressed him, he sat vacantly with it in his hand, not attempting to taste it. In the hurry of the work I lost sight of him. Next day I missed him; he was not in his usual place, waiting. I enquired about him. No one seemed to know him by sight, and as I had not got his name, could not identify him from my description.

The next day he was still absent, and the next. I never saw him again. I think he must have died that night.

* * * * * * * *

The Serbs had taken so many Austrian prisoners during the great advance that they did not know what to do with them. Merely feeding them was a huge item in itself. Distributing, housing and guarding was a problem immensely aggravated by the fact that Lower Serbia was full of refugees, whose homes had been destroyed by the vandal "Schwabs" during their advance in October and November. There were over five thousand of these prisoners in Uskub itself, a ragged, depressed body of shuffling men in untidy grey uniforms, whom we used to see marching in gangs backwards and forwards to work on the roads, followed by an escort with fixed bayonets. Most of them had overcoats and top-boots; some were minus one or the other, either because they had been lost or stolen, or sold by their owners for a few dinars, in order to purchase some small luxuries.

The basement of our No. 3 Hospital was used as one of their barracks; the upper part as a hospital for such of them as were ill. Sickness was very rife amongst them, partly owing to the privations they had gone through, partly to the insufficient food they were getting, partly to the overcrowding and lack of any ordinary sanitary arrangements worthy of the name.

Not that there was any deliberate cruelty in this. Not at all. According to Serbian ideas, they were not really badly housed and fed. Indeed, as we soon discovered, they were about as well provided for in that respect as the Serbian soldiers themselves, and certainly as well as the Serbian refugees.

But, according to English ideas, the conditions were deplorable. It was obvious to us that if any epidemic started they would succumb like flies. Worse still, we saw that in addition they would be a serious menace to the health of the Serbian community also, if any such danger as we feared arose.

Once or twice we pointed this out to our old Serbian Commandant, Major Suskalovitch, and he thoroughly agreed. But, with a shrug of his shoulders, and eloquent hands, he would say:

"What would you. What can we do? Our own people are in like case."

He had been in Uskub for forty years under the Turks, and had imbibed deeply of their philosophy of "Fate." It was the Will of Allah. In addition, as he had been educated at Vienna, and had an Austrian wife, he knew it was thought he was too lenient already towards the "Schwab." Nevertheless he did as much as he could to lighten the lot of such as came under his control; and it was he, I think, who first conceived the idea of using them as bolnitchers in our hospital.

Gradually then, we began to replace our useless Macedonian bolnitchers with Austrians, until we had over a hundred acting as stretcher bearers, food distributors and cleaners. To keep the hospital stores supplied with sawn and chopped wood required quite a number. To carry water and help in the kitchens more still. Masons and carpenters amongst the prisoners were used to erect partitions, and do repairs in the buildings under our control. We even discovered a man who could make splints and artificial limbs.

There was never any lack of volunteers for hospital

work, as it was considered much less laborious than road making. Naturally we were very pleased. The men worked splendidly, and were readily amenable to discipline.

Soon after the sudden departure of Ike, we asked the Commandant if he could find someone amongst the Austrian prisoners who could speak English. That is how we got "James" and "Anthony." James was our great find. Before the war he had been foreign correspondent in a bank in Prague. He could speak several Slav languages beside German and English. He had learnt business habits in New York. He was a sergeant in the Field Artillery. Obviously he was just the man we wanted, and we made him Chief Interpreter in the hospital at once. In a week he produced order out of chaos amongst the Austrian bolnitchers in the hospital.

As a Czech, he was naturally very lukewarm about the war; but he was sufficiently Austrian to have, and express, the utmost contempt for the dirt and slovenliness he found everywhere in Serbia. He never mentioned the high courage, the light-heartedness, the intense generosity of the people. Perhaps as a prisoner of war it was too much to expect of him.

Anthony was our other find. Years before he had been a waiter at the Hotel Cecil. When war broke out he was the keeper of a small inn somewhere in his native Bohemia. He had been captured with his entire company when asleep in bivouac in the mountains south of Valievo, and with some thousands of his countrymen sent south to us to be interned.

We made him mess steward, and with a pyjama jacket over his uniform he used to wait on us with all the aplomb of a *maitre d'hotel*, balancing plates and dishes with the skill which constant practice only can produce. He had an understudy, a morose, silent fellow whom none of us ever heard speak. Every morning the pair used to sally forth with a basket to

buy the day's provisions for the mess, for the "White Rabbit" had proved a hopeless failure as purveyor, because everyone cheated him, foisting the very worst joints, the toughest chickens, the stalest vegetables on his unsuspecting innocence, aggravating their conduct in addition by charging him the highest possible price for the awful things he brought back.

With Anthony as caterer, and Charlie, our fat good-natured Maltese cook, in the kitchen, we began to fare much better. Our work lessening also gave us more time to think, more leisure to enjoy. Our letters coming through regularly made us feel less cut off from the world. The fact that no fresh cases of small-pox broke out in the unit made us more at ease.

Wood was still plentiful, and we could have roaring fires to keep out the cold. The "White Rabbit," by some lucky aberration, managed to obtain some decent oil lamps instead of the miserable tin dips we had been using; and it was extraordinary how much more comfortable our quarters looked when we came in cold and tired to warm rooms lit by a cheerful light.

When the day's work was done, and dinner over, we used to gravitate to the bright-lit Salon, and, lounging with pipes aglow, fall into desultory talk over the happenings of the day. Sometimes Steve would play on the mouth organ. Sometimes we would listen to our orderlies singing part-songs. Often the Consul, or someone from the Paget Unit would drop in with the gossip of the day.

We were all happy, working hard together; all pleasantly tired, all glad that our lot had fallen in a place where we could get such an immense variety of experience. Afterwards we used to look back on these days as our golden period.

Before we quite realised it, Christmas was almost upon us.

The Little Red Woman was greatly exercised over this. With her warm over-flowing heart she had now

taken the cause of the Austrian prisoners also on her shoulders. According to her it was Christmas Eve, rather than Christmas itself, which was the important day for them. To make them feel less lonely, therefore, she induced our Commandant to provide them with a special dinner for the occasion in the basement of our No. 3 Hospital, and to this dinner, in addition to herself, Sherlock was invited, because he had been looking specially after their health.

As it happened Steve and I were alone in the mess that night; so after dinner it occurred to us we might slip over and look on at the festivities without being seen.

It was a cold, raw night when we turned out. The No. 3 Hospital was in darkness, and we had to grope our way across the mattresses, scattered over the empty ground floor, to find the corner where a staircase led down to the basement, guided by the sound of violins coming from below.

A rush of hot exhausted air met us when we quietly drew aside the blanket which acted as a curtain at the head of the staircase. The bright light from many lamps blinded us for a moment. Then we saw a long table, decorated with green, down the middle of the room, lined by men in grey uniforms sitting on benches. All the lights were on the table; but on the outer edge of illumination we could see beds, from which sitting-up patients with bright feverish eyes looked on.

Great steins of beer stood before each sitting guest; and for the moment all the bitterness of captivity was absent from their animated faces.

At the upper end of the room there was a little platform, with an orchestra of three violins and a 'cello playing softly some queer melancholy Hungarian music that brought an odd lump to the throat, a moisture to the eye, that made one feel sad yet happy, proud, and a little lonely, an odd medley of emotions, owing to which I felt glad to be in the darkness on the edge of the light.

A very smart, good-looking young sergeant appeared to be master of the ceremonies. He went about gaily, seeing that everyone was being looked after. He was particularly gallant to the Little Red Woman, who sat smiling and happy, queen of the evening.

A number of Serbian sestras in their white Red Cross caps were scattered amongst the men. A few Serbian soldiers were also there as guests, a little detached, a little supercilious, faintly saturnine. Looking at the open blue eyes and blond features of the Austrians, swayed by the music of the orchestra, one could see they came of a softer, more sentimental, less primitive race, and could understand how man to man in fierce animal conflict they were bound to get the worst of it. Watching them, it was difficult to believe that these emotional music lovers could have been guilty of the awful atrocities which had marred the fair fame of the Austrian army during the horrible months when they held the northern third of Serbia in their hands.

Quietly standing in our dark corner we looked on and listened to the music. We saw the Little Red Woman being toasted in a eulogistic speech, watched her flush with pleased embarrassment, saw Sherlock, who was sitting beside her, lean over and speak in her ear, saw her shake her head, then waver. Finally she got up on her feet, and made a little halting speech in German, thanking them for what they had said about her, and winding up by hoping that next year they would all enjoy a Merry Christmas in their own homes, when the cruelties of war would be over.

All the time she was speaking the leader of the orchestra, a mere boy in appearance, but already, they told me, a leading star in the Conservatoire at Prague, kept his eyes fastened on her in an ecstasy of emotional forgetfulness. But when she stopped, and gathered up her things as if to leave, he seemed to wake up, ran his fingers through his long hair, and turning spoke quickly to his companions.

Then an unexpected thing happened. Before she had time to move, the orchestra broke into the solemn strains of the Russian National Anthem. An electric thrill ran through the room. There were many Austrian Slavs there, and at once everyone was on his feet, voices took up the refrain, and the grand old tune came thundering up to us standing in the darkness of the stairway.

"Thank you. Thank you very, very much," we heard her say, with a gulp in her voice.

"We'd better beat it, before she comes," said Steve, hurriedly. "Say, Father," he added when we were once more safely outside in the dark night again. "It seems a shame we've got to fight the Austrian."

"I know, old thing," I answered. "It's just their bad luck to be on the losing side. But though they're a delightful people they're without any moral backbone, and the Serb is the better man to go tiger shooting with."

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On Christmas day we finished work at noon to give our Austrian orderlies as much of the day as possible to themselves. The fact that we and they alone celebrated Christmas on that day made us feel peculiarly friendly towards them; for the Serbs, the Russians and the Greeks, still adhere to the old Julian Calendar, and their Christmas was yet thirteen days ahead.

At night the whole British colony had been invited to dine together at the quarters of the Paget Unit; and everyone was looking forward to an evening which would make us feel less exiled. But on the Christmas morning the first of the long toll Serbia was to take from us was exacted in the death of one of the Paget nurses, and all the evening we felt the shadow over us.

The funeral was fixed for 2 p.m. on the following Saturday; and the Little Red Woman and I picked our way through the mud by a series of back streets to

the "Gymnasium," where the "Serbian Relief Fund Unit" had its hospital. Picturesque groups of Serbian women and children, in their most gaudy holiday attire, hung round the entrance gate, fascinated. A military band played in the quadrangle in front of the hospital. A platoon of the Students' Corps from Belgrade stood in rank on one side of the entrance. A group of high Serbian officials, in gold epaulettes, gossiped quietly on the steps. The open hearse stood waiting below. Finally out came the coffin wrapped in a Union Jack. It was put in the hearse, and the procession formed quietly. In front came the band, playing the Serbian Marche Funebre. After it came the firing party. An acolyte, swinging a silver incense burner, followed, and then four gorgeously-arrayed priests of the Greek Church, headed by the Bishop of Uskub.

At the Cathedral we had an elaborately intoned service in Greek, with much chanting. Afterwards, on the portico of the Cathedral, standing over the coffin, the Serbian Commandant of the hospital to which she had been attached, made her "funeral oration" to the assembled throng, saying how this woman from far-off England had come to Serbia and laid down her life for the sake of the Serbian people. The Serbs are natural orators, and the Little Red Woman told me it was a beautiful speech. I noticed many wet eyes around.

When he had finished the band struck up again, and the grim procession began to wind its way through the streets, over the railway, through a sea of mud to the Christian graveyard beyond the station. There the British Consul, in full-dress uniform, read the simple, beautiful service of the English Church over the open grave, with the Greek priests, the Serbian officers, and the assembled mourners looking on.

There was a pause, and quietly someone started a hymn. It was "Lead, kindly light," and all the British, standing amongst the silent Serbs, joined in.

All the while, I felt most curiously detached. I

ought to have been moved; but I was not, for I had not known the nurse, and could associate no loss with the ceremony. Nevertheless, I was oddly fascinated, particularly by the funeral march. It was the first time I had heard it. Afterwards in the months to come it became only too, too familiar. I used to wonder how I could ever have liked it; for it came to be horrible, a nightmare, a dreadful thing to be pushed back in one's mind by any and every means.

As it was, I remember returning quietly that afternoon, when it was all over, and doing two operations. Later on, after such a scene, I daren't have trusted myself to amputate a finger.

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Behind the hospital, scarcely three minutes' walk away, was a bare open space of ground which once had been an ancient Turkish cemetery. So old was it, however, that it had been totally neglected for years, its gravestones had fallen, its legends become undecipherable. When the Serbs took over Uskub they found this area derelict.

In Uskub there was a weekly fair, which had been going on for centuries. Always it had been held in a little square opposite the "Fortress" in the old city; but as the market grew, vendors overflowed yearly more and more down into the narrow winding side streets and lanes leading from the square into the bazaar, to the great inconvenience of customers, and the general dislocation of all traffic in the neighbourhood.

Everyone saw the inconveniences of it, but nobody did anything. To the Turk the fact that the market always had been there was evidence that it always ought to be there. The Serbs, however, when they started energetically to improve the town, thought otherwise. One of the first things they did was to take the roof off the bazaar just below the market, and let in the light of day, so that it was no longer possible to wander, as

No. 4. No. 2. No. 3. No. 1.

Plate VI.—Our Hospitals, from the Market Place.

The saturnine assistant. Anthony. James.
Charlie, the fat Maltese cook.

Plate VI.—Interpreters and Kitchen Staff.

in Salonika, into a dim-lit cavern of delight, finding unexpected treasure. Next they set about finding a new and improved site for the weekly fair; and the disused burying ground to which I have alluded was chosen as the most suitable. By the time we arrived the new market was in full swing, and, although the old still strove valiantly to maintain itself, the obvious advantages of the new had already settled its fate. All the vendors flocked to the site behind the hospital, and every Tuesday saw it crowded to overflowing. Long before daybreak the peasants from the surrounding mountains would start in with their produce, carried on pack-saddles or ox-waggons, to reach the town for the opening of the market at nine o'clock, trudging along on foot with their wives and daughters, intent on driving bargains and getting value even to an infinitesimal fraction of a farthing.

We had all heard of this market. Soon after our arrival, stories began to circulate of wonderful embroideries that the nurses of the Paget Unit had been able to buy, of gorgeous Albanian costumes, of harem skirts, of silks, of curiously inlaid weapons, of silver and of filigree. This unit was still getting its hospital ready at that time, and had leisure. But we had never had any time to spare since our arrival. Always we were too busy. Always there was too much to do. After Christmas, however, work began to slacken. Sometimes we were actually free in the afternoon. Then one morning James announced that we could easily be finished by noon. It was a Tuesday. From the top window of the hospital we could see the busy fair ground.

The Consul, who was a great authority on embroideries, had told me recently that the market was particularly well supplied with these, and shown me some table centres, and a number of useless little mats such as women love, which he had bought as wedding presents for a girl friend in England. I mentioned this

to the Little Red Woman, and saw her eyes glow wistfully.

"Suppose we take half an hour off," I suggested.

She looked at me eagerly.

"Do you indeed think that we might?" she said, just like a schoolboy offered an apple which he is afraid he ought to refuse.

"Sure," I said. "The others can carry on easily; and we'll be back in half an hour."

So we went.

Three women with amphorae on their heads, gossiping at a well, stared at us as we passed. A gendarme, wandering aimlessly round, came smartly to attention. We picked our way gingerly over the muddy ground, carefully not looking where a platoon of Austrian prisoners were washing their shirts, and hanging them out to dry, while they stood bare-chested in the sunlight. It was a beautiful, warm, spring-like morning. Winding our way through a barrier of waggons, tethered ponies and donkeys, past ruminating oxen, of whom the Little Red Woman was very frightened, we came presently on a display of pottery—clay lamps for oil like those of ancient Egypt, amphorae, flat basins nested from the size of a soap dish to that of a lordly cream pan, bowls, pie dishes. I half stopped to look, and the wife of the potter tried to sell to us. We pushed on, with a polite shake of the head, between rows of sacks filled with wheat, barley, oats, maize, passing potato merchants, sellers of "paprika," cabbages, onions, passing cheesemongers, dealers in old iron, cast-off clothing, ploughshares, horse-shoes, leather, meeting peasant women selling eggs in baskets, until at length we came to the cloth market section. Here there was a broad pathway, on either side of which vendors had their regular pitches where they squatted, cross-legged, with their wares spread before them. But on the outskirts round and about, many peasant women wandered with bundles of embroidered cloth-lengths balanced on

their heads. These bundles usually contained one or more of the white skirts, worked in gaudy colours, which are worn on Sundays and Saints' days by the Christian peasants of Macedonia, or the sleeveless coat which goes with the skirt.

The Consul had a representative collection of these. They were very striking, and we were keen on getting some good specimens, for the costume worn by the Macedonian peasant women is most attractive. In the long winter evenings they spin the wool from their own sheep and weave it into cloth. From this thick white cloth the sleeveless decorated coat and embroidered skirt are made. They cover their heads with a gay handkerchief. The skirt stops about eighteen inches from the ground to display bright-hued socks, "charapa," knitted in lozenge-shaped designs. The feet are encased in "opanke," sandals of leather or dressed sheepskin, fastened with thongs over instep and ankles. In cold weather they wear, in addition, a long sheepskin coat reaching to below the knees. The wool is worn outside in dry weather. When it rains they simply turn it inside out.

Slowly we wandered along, looking at the various exhibits, thoroughly enjoying ourselves, conscious of a stolen holiday. Many of the embroidery and lace merchants were Turkish women, wearing the old-fashioned disfiguring white "yashmak" across mouth and forehead, covering the hair completely.

This covering of the hair is typically Mohammedan. The Christian peasant woman often wears the handkerchief that covers her head so as to hide her mouth; but her hair is invariably finished in a plait which escapes, tied with gay ribbons, down her back between the shoulder blades. It is one of the quickest ways of telling a Christian.

Wandering about amongst the purchasers were a few Turkish ladies wearing the "charshaf," the thin veil, usually black, affected by the modern Mohammedan

lady. This covering, associated with the shapeless outer garment worn in the street, makes most women practically unrecognisable, and is said to have been used frequently by the Young Turks in Constantinople as an absolutely safe disguise, since no Mohammedan would ever be guilty of accosting a woman in public.

Conspicuous everywhere in the market were the Tziganes, or Gypsies. These people are found all over the Balkans. There are several villages of them around Uskub. The men work mostly as porters; the women, when they do anything, in various menial capacities. They are a handsome race, particularly the women, with high aquiline features, bold dark eyes, and erect graceful figures. The Tzigane woman affects the harem skirt. A thin white bodice covers her full bosom. The skirt is a voluminous affair of scarlet, blue, green, purple, or some other striking colour. The legs are bare; and they either walk barefooted, or wear Turkish slippers over their graceful feet.

By swinging my camera sideways, I managed to photograph one such woman, without her knowledge, holding her baby gipsy fashion on her hip.

Up and down we went, in and out, amongst the white-capped Albanians, turbaned Turks, hard-featured Macedonians in embroidered tunics, piratical-looking Tziganes, fezzed Jews, squat Bulgarians in brown home-spun, tall Roumanians with high-domed astrakan hats, Serbs in grew forage caps, Austrian prisoners in light blue untidy uniforms. We were in a holiday mood, and thoroughly enjoying ourselves. The Little Red Woman eventually bought a table centre and a pair of wooden sandals, bargaining for each article at intervals, for half an hour, after the immemorial custom of the East.

A Serbian field officer, with gold epaulettes and clanking sabre, sauntered past us, carrying two live chickens, which he had just bought, slung, tied by their legs, over his elbow. I thought what a sensation he

would have created in Whitehall; but here no one seemed to find it the least incongruous.

Serbian ladies with satchels picked their way daintily through the throng, frugally purchasing their weekly store of provisions. A long-haired orthodox priest, in his brimless hat and rusty cassock, the "pope" of some little village in the hills, rode past us on his rough mountain pony, with full saddle-bags. Itinerant merchants of sweetmeats, sherbet, and "boza" (a drink made from millet, much-loved by the Serbians) perambulated to and fro, calling their wares. We came across the Consul good-naturedly helping some nurses to purchase. They told us volubly of their bargainings, the light of battle in their eyes.

Then we went back to the hospital to dress some more compound femurs. And so to lunch.

Next day we were finished in the early afternoon, and Steve and I started off on a voyage of discovery through the town. But we did not get far. Steve had an inordinate craving for what he had learnt in America to call "candies." We were passing the Greek patisserie, when he noticed a bottle of sugared plums in the window, and like a flash he was inside. A little later, crossing the bridge, we discovered a shop where they sold olives, tinned things and delicatessen. Now he was supremely happy, for olives were another of his crazes. The proprietor spoke bad French, Steve equally bad Serbian. Between them, however, they managed to come to an understanding. We departed laden with spoil; and there was no more exploring that afternoon. To Steve the discovery of the olives was a supreme event. He ate half a bottle on the way home. He had a passionate love for them; and, when he found that none of the rest of us really cared for them, was genuinely disappointed, only lighting up again at dinner when the Little Red Woman came to his rescue, and confessed she too had a like craving.

The next afternoon Sherlock and I started to explore over the bridge in the old town, making for the "Charshiya" (Bazaar), past the monumental fountain, inscribed with verses from the Koran commemorating some pious Turkish lady's gift, which was one of our landmarks.

A wrong turn brought us to the quarter of the butchers, where scraggy carcases hung in serried rows on greasy blood-stained hooks. Hurriedly we plunged past into a maze of winding, uneven cobbled streets filled with a motley pedestrian population, pinned to one side occasionally by a ramshackle fiacre, a man on horseback, a slowly-moving ox-wagon. To keep our bearings we used to note certain places. Here was the shop of the Albanian, displaying pyramids of white skull-caps. There was a ruined mosque. Here was a wall with a latticed dormer window above. There the tomb of a Holy man. Here a steep street led up to the little church, with its squat wooden belfry surmounted by a cross projecting against the sky-line. All of these served us as landmarks, from which we knew our way.

At one spot, beside a desolate Turkish cemetery, an old blind woman sat constantly, pushing out her skinny arms and calling as we passed:—"Alms, for the love of Allah. Alms, for the love of Allah," in a hoarse, croaking voice, which seemed to fall upon an unheeding world, since no one ever appeared to give her anything.

In the street of the dealers in leather we came to a halt. Everywhere, in the open shop fronts, were rows upon rows of sandals, Turkish slippers, gorgeous leather belts fitted to hold cartridges, rows upon rows of daggers, and hunting knives in leather cases. We bargained vainly. Against us was a conspiracy of raised prices. As we were not seriously buying we left it at that. What we really were looking for was a bell for the mess table, to call the ubiquitous Anthony.

Neither of us knew the Serbian for "bell," and our attempts to describe what we wanted brought much puckering of eyebrows, and shaking of heads, from the proprietors of the various ironmongers' shops we tried. Eventually, in an old iron store, we found a cow bell, such as one sees in Switzerland. This we fell upon joyously. It was exactly what we wanted.

We were rather proud of it at first. It stood on the mess table, and Anthony answered it promptly no matter where he was. Evidently he loved it. Perhaps the sound of it held some pleasant memory for him. Gradually, therefore, he began to appropriate it. It used to disappear from the mess table. It found its way into the kitchen more and more. He used it to call his saturnine assistant, and summon us to dinner. We smiled over his infatuation. But, when he started to use it to rouse us in the chill morning, from our cosy slumbers to a seven o'clock breakfast, we began rather to dislike it—passively at first, then actively.

One day it disappeared. No one asked any questions. It simply disappeared. Anthony was disconsolate, but we all breathed freely again.

It was the day after we bought the bell that we discovered the "HAN," the great mediæval caravanserai of Uskub.

Barclay and I had been wandering in the street of the makers of filigree, walking into their tiny shops, watching the deft hands of the usually solitary workman as he turned the wire with consumate skill into delicate spiral designs, bargaining gently, as one should when dealing with an artist.

It was after we had left one of these little rabbit hutches that we saw an imposing stone gateway down a little side turning of miserable lean-to buildings, where the workers in sheep skins carried on their occupation, cross-legged in public. Over the gateway was a long imposing frontage of mouldering cut stone, two stories high, pierced at regular intervals by little square

latticed windows without glass, surmounted by some squat, lead-roofed cupolas and twin chimneys, producing a curious atmosphere of mediæval beauty which gave a finishing touch to the picture.

The archway itself was some twenty feet deep, leading to the cloistered quadrangle within, and was wide enough to allow four men abreast to ride beneath its hospitable shade. On either side, along the whole length, was a polished stone divan. Here in ancient Turkish times sat the keeper of the gate, cross-legged, turbaned, smoking his hookah, giving grave salutation to the incoming merchants followed by their pack animals laden with silks, perfumes, spices and jewellery. We can imagine what tales he could tell of a summer's evening to those who had the honour of an invitation to be seated in his company, tales of the perils of the road, of incursions by Illyrian bandits, of Almissan pirates, of forced levies by the Bani of Bosnia whose strongholds lay on the great caravan route from Constantinople to Ragusa, of sea rovers from the Greek isles attacking the galleys on the way to Salonika, of the grim Knights of St. John of Malta who had fought the protecting fleet, of the raids of the Normans, "whom may Allah cause to perish," of the pride of the Venetians, and their defeats at the hands of the Faithful. In his time he must have been a most important personage. Now nothing remains but the stone divan, polished by the use of centuries.

The archway leads straight into the great quadrangle, in the centre of which a marble fountain once played. The broken fountain still remains, but the water has ceased to flow. At our entry into the silent square two blue-white pigeons flapped heavily away. All around ran cloisters, with square stone columns supporting round brick arches. The ground floor, no doubt, was used as storehouses. Stone staircases, on two sides of the quadrangle, gave access to the upper cloistered gallery, from which open doors led into quaint little

chambers, with enormously thick walls and white-washed arched ceilings, each room lit by a deep embrasured window, without glass. Circular recesses in the thickness of the walls acted as cupboards. The rooms looked bare and prison-like; but no doubt in the old days hanging curtains and rich carpets from the Orient gave comfort and seclusion to the occupants, who, when they wished to discuss business, could spread their mats outside in the broad cloistered corridor.

In the middle ages Uskub was one of the great meeting places between East and West, and a flourishing Ragusan colony existed in consequence. Here came the merchants of Macedonia, and here they were met by the noble mercators of the famous Republic. Three months was not an uncommon time to stay at the caravanserai, where, after the leisurely manner of the East, the merchants met, sipped coffee amiably together, and exchanged courtly compliments before finally descending to business.

Obviously such a collection of important people required an entourage in keeping; and, to accommodate this, there was another quadrangle behind, in which were the kitchens, servants' quarters, and stabling for two hundred horses in a huge hall, built like the crypt of a cathedral. Here dwelt the Vlach drovers, and the armed escort which accompanied the caravan of two or three hundred horses carrying the precious cases of salt, from the pans of Ragusa and Cattaro, on which the Balkan people absolutely depended, the rich gold brocades, silks and satins of Venice, the jewelled armour from Ravenna, which the great Voyvods, Zupans and Pashas coveted, the cloth, glass-ware, gold and silver ornaments of Rimini and Cervia, which the Turks could not otherwise obtain. These in exchange were bartered for the raw products of Serbia, Bulgaria and Macedonia —cattle, wool, hides, honey, wax, cheese, silver and iron ore, gold, lead, copper, quicksilver and tin. It

was an enormous business; and to deal with it Ragusan colonies were scattered all over the Balkans. They established mints, farmed the taxes, worked the mines, practically controlled the internal as well as the external trade from the Adriatic to the Black Sea, from the Danube to the Ægean.

Little wonder, then, that they had built for themselves such immense caravanserais as this great "Han" at Uskub. The breadth of design, the spaciousness, the immense strength of the building, impressed us greatly. The architect evidently meant it to last for all time. He had no doubts of its continued usefulness.

And now all these things are dead. Gone are the glories of Ragusa. Its merchant princes are no more. The very name of the Republic is forgotten. To point out its site on the map is too much for most educated people of to-day.

"And to think that this wonderful place is now used only as an occasional overflow barracks for troops," said Barclay. Sic Transit—!

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Next day was New Year's day, January 1st, 1915. In Slav countries the beginning of the year is a most important event, and it is the correct thing to leave cards on all one's friends, and the people one does not like, but wishes to placate. But it was only their eighteenth of December in Serbia, according to the Julian calendar, so when we found ourselves snowed out by cards from all the official people, we thought it rather charming of them to remember.

Barclay and I and a stray Englishman, a mining engineer from up-country, were dining with the Consul that night.

"What you've got to remember, in reply, is that their Christmas is next week, and their New Year a week later," he said. "I'm looking forward to trouble in the New Year," he added gravely.

"Why?" I said.

"Because Northern Macedonia is to become part of Serbia, officially, on the first of January. The people are to have elections, and appoint members to the "Skupshtina."

"But why should that cause trouble?"

The Consul smiled, and remained silent; but the engineer, who had no official reticences to maintain, answered:

"Why! Because they will then be subject to conscription. The young men will be called up to swell the denuded Serbian Army, and they do not like it. Many of them are Bulgar in sympathy. Such as are Mohammedans are afraid they may be called upon to fight against their co-religionists. The Albanians and Tziganes don't want to fight for anyone, except for and amongst themselves. So there you are! The average Macedonian is neither Serb, nor Greek, nor Bulgar. He's just whatever suits him at the time. Lord! The Macedonian question! There's going to be 'small hell' when they begin to rope in recruits in Uskub. The bazaar is seething with revolt already."

The Consul smiled gravely.

"Nationality in Macedonia is largely a question of religion," he said. "At one time all these people belonged to the Greek Church, and so were classed as Greeks, though often they could not speak a word of Greek. Then the Serbian Orthodox Church was recognised by the wily Turk, who wished to divide the Christians, and people of this church were considered Serbs. Of course, the Serbs soon began a propaganda to expand their Church; and the priests of the two sects started fighting over the bodies of the infants, inveigling them into their separate schools. Then the Bulgars took a hand. Their Church—the Exarch—is slightly different, and people who are "Exarches" are considered Bulgars. The Greeks and Serbs do not re-

cognise the Exarch, and so both churches mutually excommunicate one another."

The Engineer smiled at some memories.

"I remember in the old days, that is some five to ten years ago, wandering bands of Komitadgi used to convert whole villages to the Greek, Serb or Bulgar Church by the sword."

Noting my surprised look, he continued.

"I know. It sounds almost incredible. But it's true. Those who did not 'vert were simply pillaged or even occasionally slaughtered by their fellow Christians. The Turks looked on and smiled. It suited their policy splendidly to have these Christians love one another in this way. As a rule they connived alternately at the doings of one or other side, as suited them; but when things became too lively they fell on both impartially, and there was another Macedonian massacre to horrify Europe. How the Turks must have smiled!"

"But are these Macedonian people really different racially?" I asked.

"In a way, yes, and no. They're just Macedonians. The Serb proper, and the Bulgar proper are quite distinct races. The Bulgar is not a Slav, though he speaks a Slav language. The Macedonian is a mixture of Albanian, Serb, and Bulgar, with Greek on the littoral. The dialect is equally understood by the Serb and the Bulgar. There's very little Greek in it. The people here say they're Serb now; but if the Bulgar came next week they would be Bulgar. Both countries have held sway over Macedonia in the past, and both claim, historically, that it belongs to them. The Greek, of course, has a stronger claim historically, but not racially, than either of them. Probably the rightful owner is the "Vlach," whom nobody ever considers, because he doesn't bother about it at all."

"Lord! What a muddle," said Barclay, yawning slightly, as we got up to go.

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By this time we were getting very short of pipe tobacco, nothing having as yet come through to us from England. There was, of course, lots of contraband tobacco in the country, and we had tried it. But none of us could smoke it. When the Chief announced next evening, therefore, at dinner that he was going to Salonika in the morning, we commissioned him urgently to bring back anything in the shape of civilised tobacco he could find.

Salonika then, as later, was the home of the wildest rumours. Most of these we discounted; but occasionally we grew uneasy when they persisted for more than a week.

The latest story that had come to us was that Greece was on the eve of declaring war on Turkey, that 200,000 Turks were concentrated at Adrianople, ready to make a dash across the frontier; and that if they did so, the line to Ghevgeli would be closed to civilian traffic, thus cutting off Serbia indefinitely. This would have been a serious matter for us, as most of the cash of the unit was banked at Salonika, and it would be impossible to get gold over the frontier once war was declared. If then, the rumours were true, and it was possible we might have to trek through Montenegro, it was very advisable we should obtain our gold as soon as possible. That was the object of the Chief's journey.

The train from Nish was scheduled to arrive in Uskub at five-thirty in the morning, and due to leave for Salonika at about a quarter to six. But frequently it did not arrive until after eight, and those who did not know this were kept hanging about in the raw morning air for hours. We were scarcely five minutes from the station; and when anyone went by train our practice was to send Anthony over to find out when the train was due.

For a fortnight it had been persistently late; but of course it just happened to be in time that morning; and the Chief, breakfasting leisurely at six-thirty, missed it.

When we arrived at breakfast, therefore, we found him very crestfallen.

During the day a rumour went round amongst the Serbs that a trainload of English suffragettes was passing through Uskub that night. What they were doing in Serbia no one seemed to know; but everyone was very curious to see them, as the most extraordinary stories of their exploits in England just before the war had circulated in the Balkan papers. When the train from Salonika was due that evening, therefore, the station was crowded with politely curious people, including practically all the English in Uskub—Lady Paget, Major Morrison, Mr Chichester of the Serbian Relief Unit, the Consul, one or two stray English doctors, and ourselves.

It was a beautiful mild starry night; and people wandered about aimlessly in the half darkness, over the rails as one does in Continental stations where there are no high platforms, until the train was sighted. There was a stop for half an hour, and so windows and doors opened, and the cramped passengers climbed down from the dark carriages, to stretch weary limbs and forage for hot coffee in the railway restaurant.

"What place is this?" I heard a woman say in a Scotch accent, as she peered doubtfully from the carriage door opposite me.

"This is Uskub," I told her, and thus we introduced ourselves to one another.

Soon we had a bevy of them round us—nurses in their neat uniform, fine healthy, capable-looking women, carrying the old familiar atmosphere of order and cleanliness with them, an atmosphere which we, struggling with the Augean stables of Serbian inefficiency, had well-nigh forgotten.

With the camaraderie of the profession we were all friends at once. They told us they were the Scottish Women's Unit, and that they were going to Kraguievatz. They hadn't learnt to pronounce it quite right,

but we knew what they meant. They were very proud of their unit, very proud of being Scotch, very keen to learn what sort of conditions they would have to tackle. They told us of the amount of equipment they had, the number of beds they proposed working, the sort of work they hoped to do. To hear them talk was like a draught of wine to us, rather weary, rather overworked, rather inclined not to mind that the original keen edge of our endeavour had been blunted.

Then a very serious little oval-faced woman tackled Barclay and myself. She was one of the lady doctors in charge of the unit. She asked us questions, very shrewd searching questions, which we answered to the best of our ability. She took notes solemnly of what we said, with the prim air of an examining schoolmistress. She was so very serious I almost laughed. But, remembering the enormous problem she would be up against, I steadied myself. It was most important she should know. We told her everything we could think of that might help her. Finally she put the notebook away, thanked us in her prim little formal way, and went off somewhere in the gloom to attend to something with an air of complete capability.

I never learnt her name.* I fancy, somehow, she died out there when the epidemic came. But whether she did or not, I am quite sure that a large proportion of the splendid success of that unit was due to her.

When she had gone we returned to the nurses, collected a bevy of them, and guided them to the Restaurant where they revelled in the hot coffee and rolls which twelve hours in a train without decent food made so acceptable. After seeing that the woman in the bar gave them thirty dinars for the sovereign, instead of the twenty-two she tried to foist on them, we left, wishing them good luck. Then we went to look

* It may have been Elsie Inglis.

for the Consul, guessing something was afoot, because he was behaving in the mildly mysterious way he always did when he temporarily put off his friendly and assumed his official manner. Knowing the symptoms well, it always amused us to try and find out what it was all about. We wandered up the length of the train, therefore, searching for him, until we came opposite some closed carriages out of whose windows the heads of a number of men, apparently civilians, projected.

"Blime, Bill, if there ain't a British Orficer a walkin' abaht quite open in uniform," I heard one man say in a surprised, unguarded tone.

And then the murder was out. The accent, the lean, clean-shaven faces of the men gave the show away completely. It was a detachment of British blue-jackets, disguised absurdly in ready-made civilian clothes, being sent up to Belgrade to make it hot for the Austrian monitors on the Danube.

They were under the command of a "commercial traveller," whose letters came to the Consul in the F.O. bag with "Captain R.N." on them. It was the story of "our Mr Brown" over again. We ran him down talking to the Consul. He was carrying thirty-two tons of explosives with him—"samples" he called them. They were labelled "Paprika—Hot Stuff," he told us with a quiet chuckle.

Paprika is red pepper, the national condiment of Serbia, so we fully appreciated the joke, though we thought the Austrians wouldn't. Of course, the disguise was obvious to anyone. Indeed it was not meant to deceive; but Greece was still, theoretically, a neutral state, and to have combatants passing through blatantly would have been considered bad form. As long, therefore, as they entered technically as civilians, officialdom took no notice.

But to resume. While we were talking in the Consul's group, a cheery little man, with a Scotch

bonnet and the appropriate accent, came up, asked for me, said he was the quartermaster of the Scottish Unit, and handed me a letter. I tore it open eagerly, and found it was from our friend in Malta, saying he had received my five pounds, and was sending the first instalment of the tobacco for which I had asked by the bearer of the letter.

When Barclay and I grasped this, we whooped for joy. Everything else was forgotten. We were practically at the end of our supply, and this was like manna in the wilderness.

"Produce the goods," we cried in high glee, thinking he had the parcel in his carriage.

"Cerrtainly," he said. "It is behint wi' the baggage o' the unit."

Then a great fear fell on us. We knew the Serbs. He didn't. He thought he was still in Glasgow, where a parcel in the van could be reclaimed immediately. We knew that once out of sight it might never be recovered. Consequently we were quite sick with anxiety when we began to search. Of course it was hopeless. We could not even find the baggage of the unit. No doubt it was somewhere in Serbia, and with it our precious tobacco. The little man was deeply apologetic. He offered to have a search made immediately they got to Nish. He promised, when he found it, to send it back by special messenger. He pressed us to take all the tobacco he had on his person, as a placebo. It was useless. We were absolutely disconsolate. We hadn't even the lack of conscience to spoil him of his own tobacco, knowing that in all probability his reserve supplies would be lost as well. The whole episode put the damper on our evening's amusement. We said good-bye to them all, and saw them off despondingly. Then we went back to our quarters and cursed the Scotsman. It made us mad to feel that the precious stuff was careering over Serbia, past the rightful owners who were craving for it. Next morning the

Chief managed to catch the train for Salonika, carrying our accumulated mails; and a halcyon calm fell over the unit.

A week later the tobacco turned up all right, and we forgave the Scotsman.

Plate VII. The Market. Selling embroideries (p. 145).

Plate VII. The Market. A display of pottery (p. 145).

CHAPTER VII

CHRISTMASTIDE

The Great Christmas Fair—The "Grad" and a wonderful screen—A vision of the mountains—Why the little fat man fell upon the sentry—Moslem saints—Ceremonial coffee drinking with a Holy Man—The Serbian Christmas, not forgetting the Badnyak, Polasnik, and roast sucking pig—A climb to a mountain village—Turkish graveyards—The Little Red Woman and the Lady with the yellow stockings—A dinner at the Drinoski and God save the King.

IT was Christmas week in Serbia, and preparations for the great feast were already in evidence. The Tuesday market was the greatest of the year. On that day all the peasants for miles round brought their best produce, their finest embroidery, their gayest tapestry work, in the hope of finding generous customers who would supply the money for their own Christmas purchases in the town. The Consul told me he was on the look-out for certain types of very choice embroidery which usually appeared only about this time, or Easter; and so, on that morning we promenaded together up and down, noting things but never offering to buy ourselves. That part was left to one of the Albanian kavasses (Consular servants), or the chief dragoman, Barraca, a little Spanish Jew, who could haggle and drive much better bargains than either of us.

Half the nurses from the Paget Unit seemed to be in the market. They went into ecstasies over certain native costumes, and constantly called upon us to approve their choice, or mitigate the demands of the would-be sellers. It was obvious the market was rising owing to the presence of the English community. Some

of the Serb ladies, we heard afterwards, complained bitterly.

The Consul was unable to buy anything. "They will be much cheaper after Christmas," he said philosophically, knowing he could afford to wait. But some of the nurses could not wait. Their contracts were expiring in February, and half at least of them had decided to return to England. Naturally, therefore, they were eager to collect as much as they could in the time left at their disposal. So they had to allow themselves to be fleeced, consoling themselves with the thought that, even at the enhanced prices, what they bought would be cheap in England.

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Barclay and I used to take turns to be operating surgeon for the week, and whoever was not on duty usually found he could finish hospital by tea time. It was my week off, and finding things quiet, I arranged one afternoon a few days later to go sight-seeing with the Consul. It was an opportunity not to be missed, for he was steeped in the lore of the Orient, a mine of information on all things Turkish.

Our objective that day was an ancient Christian church with a famous screen; and, if we had time afterwards, we intended going round "The GRAD," as the old Turkish fortress was called.

In Uskub the Grad dominates everything. The town itself lies in the middle of a triangular plain, with mountains all round. In this plain, overhanging the river, there rises a solitary precipitous high hill; and on this hill is the Grad. It is clear that the city gradually grew under the shelter of the hill, owed, indeed, its position to the fact that the hill could be fortified, made almost impregnable in the old days before the range of modern artillery. The site was obviously chosen for its immense strength. The Vardar, flowing just below its walls, kept it safe from any water famine,

so that, if properly provisioned and garrisoned, there was no reason, in the old days, why it should ever have been taken. There must indeed have been some sort of fortress there from time immemorial. Always from any part of the old city its battlemented white walls could be seen, and often, when we had got hopelessly lost in the Turkish quarter, we used to steer by it to known country again.

Coming over the Vardar bridge that afternoon we looked at it, high up, ethereal in the blue.

"I think," said the Consul, "we'd better see the Church first, it gets dark in the little place so early."

So we walked slowly up the precipitous street to the top of the hill, until we came to the crumbling walls of the great bastion of the Fortress built in Byzantine days. Then we turned across the old market square, past the house of the potter, along a blind wall.

"This is the Church," said the Consul.

"Can't see any church," I said.

"No. You will in a moment, though. Christians were not encouraged to make their churches prominent in Moslem countries, even though the Moslem has always been more tolerant than the Christian."

He turned as he spoke through a postern gate in the wall, and we were in a little flagged courtyard. A small wooden belfry, surmounted by a cross, stood just inside the door. At the opposite end of the courtyard were a few tombstones, close to a low arched red-tiled roof, under which circular steps descended to the church door, making the building almost underground. Inside the doorway was a stall displaying candles, which the pious bought and lit before the Ikon of the saint. The church itself was a tiny building, capable of accommodating possibly a hundred people. There were no pews, but round the walls were a row of plain, much-worn wooden stalls, and at the back was a grille behind which women were relegated.

The church itself had no architectural pretensions. It was a drab, dim-lit place. What gave it distinction throughout all Serbia, however, was the screen. This was a most wonderful structure of carved wood, dark with the grime of centuries, representing over three hundred Biblical scenes ranging from the Garden of Eden to the Crucifixion and Ascension. Three brothers were responsible for it, and it represented the work of over thirty years.

It was a vast thing, overpoweringly so in the tiny church, which it cramped and dominated. Perhaps it was from some subconscious appreciation of this that the priests had hung little tinsel pictures of Byzantine saints all over it, as if to make it less imposing, more companionable.

When we entered the church it was empty, save for one solitary priest intoning in a corner. All the while we were examining the screen, he kept on at his service in a plaintive recitative, occasionally moving from place to place, swinging a curiously carved silver bowl of burning incense, taking absolutely no notice of us.

"Do you think he is annoyed with us?" I said. "Are we disturbing him?"

"Not at all. He simply doesn't know that we exist," replied the Consul.

I watched him in his gorgeous vestments, his draggled beard falling on his chest, his long grey hair tied in a pigtail behind, his general air of griminess of face and hands and nails; and as I watched I felt that I was looking at a resurrection—for the figure exactly reproduced those found in old illuminated mediæval manuscripts, depicting famous Bishops, Saints and Martyrs of the Church, in early Christian times.

"Why does piety go with dirt in this country?" I asked, as we gained the street again.

"Oh, well. Our mediæval Bishops were not any cleaner, and we've both known dons who were very so so. After all cleanliness is an invention of the 19th

century. Only the Moslem is clean in the East," said the Consul tolerantly.

Talking thus we crossed the road and entered the Grad. It was a wide spacious place with various barrack-like buildings, and one great square in which a brigade could have manœuvred. We were not interested in the hospital part of it. What we wanted to see was the sunset from the battlements, for from the saluting battery on the old Roman bastion the view over the city and the surrounding country was immense. All around and below us were the spires and minarets, the quaint irregular streets, the little tree-sheltered courtyards around the red-roofed houses of the Turkish town, through which the broad Vardar rolled in sinuous, sweeping coils southward to the rim of the flat horizon. Everywhere, on the outskirts of the town, were queer irregularly dotted white areas, which we recognised as the Turkish graveyards, so characteristic of the place.

Then as the eye swept over the foothills, north and west and east, one came upon the mountains. To the east beyond Kumanovo were those on the Bulgarian frontier. To the north was the great black mountain of Uskub—the Tzarnagora—now covered with ravine-shadowed snow. But it was the west that brought a light to the eyes, a tightness to the throat; for there in the sunset lay the great ranges of the Chara mountains clothed in perpetual snow, culminating in one huge blue-white sugar-loafed peak—Lynboton—a shimmering haze of beauty, pink in the evening sunlight, curiously resembling the famous Fujiyama, in the middle island of Japan, seen when steaming south from Yokohama in the early morning.

Always in Uskub one had the feeling of those blue-white mountains lifting their peaks towards heaven; and often later, when one felt depressed, the sight of them, caught at an unexpected angle from some squalid street, sent a shiver of delight that raised one for the moment into the eternal, the unchangeable, away from

the crowded misery of the immediate. For mountains, especially snow-clad mountains, somehow seem to make one feel small, evanescent. They are so solemn, so pure, so steadfast, so unaffected by time, that one's little affairs seem to melt to insignificant proportions in their presence. Feeling this, one understands why the Greeks placed Zeus on High Olympus. It was a natural corollary.

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Uskub is a city of many mosques; but in our time they were nearly all deserted, for most of the wealthy Turks had departed after the annexation. Gradually, therefore, the Serbs had begun to appropriate them, turning them, while we were there, into military storehouses, barracks, or refugee shelters for those who had fled from Northern Serbia before the Austrians.

Practically every mosque has been erected to the memory of some "Holy man," and the tomb of the saint is always attached to the mosque. Uskub was full of the tombs of these "Holy men" in all sorts of unexpected places, for every holy man did not have a mosque to his memory. There was one such tomb in the Citadel itself.

As a rule the Serbs were very punctilious in preserving them from desecration, and such as were associated with a mosque were always kept under lock and key, so that one had to hunt round for the keeper if one wished to see them.

Almost opposite the entrance to the citadel there was a most imposing mosque, used no doubt by the pasha in command in the great days of Turkish sovereignty. On our way back from the Grad we tried to get in, but found it sealed. Looking in a side window we saw that it was piled high with kerosene tins. Then we thought we would have a look for the tomb of the Holy man. It was in a little cupola-shaped building alongside. We tried the door. It was locked.

All the time a Serbian sentry on guard over the kerosene store was eyeing us most suspiciously. When we tried to get into the tomb it was too much for him, and he advanced with fixed bayonet, challenging us in a patois of which the Consul could make nothing. Obviously he was a newcomer, and was puzzled by my uniform. In vain we expostulated with him. He would have none of us.

"And the comic part of it is, he is speaking in a Bulgarian dialect," said the Consul.

The remainder of the guard were now approaching, looking very surly. Obviously we would have to go.

At that moment, however, a fat person in civilian clothes came strolling round the corner, recognised the Consul, spoke to him in German, and found out what was the matter.

Then suddenly he seemed to get perfectly furious, turning and rending the sentry, calling him a fool, the son of a fool, the father of fools, an ass, a mule with neither pride of ancestry nor hope of posterity. It was a wonderful effort in vituperation, and the guard visibly wilted.

He informed them that we were Englesi from the great country across the sea which was the friend of little Serbia, and that the sentry had offered it a deadly insult in impeding us. He added casually that any true Serb would have known all this, and that he, evidently, was only an ignorant Bulgar.

By this time gradually the guard had been melting away, sneaking off shamefacedly, trying to appear as if the sentry had nothing to do with them. Obviously the day was won. The sentry suddenly came to the salute, turned and marched off. Personally I felt quite sorry for him, he was so absolutely in the right.

A sudden calm now fell on the fat person. From a strutting turkey-cock he altered to a cooing dove.

Did we want to see the Mosque? Did we want to see

the Holy man's tomb? We had only to order. From somewhere on his person he produced a huge key, like a small axe in size, and led the way to the tomb. We followed meekly, for we did not really want to see it very much. But he insisted so, we felt we ought to satisfy him. He threw open the door with a magnificent gesture.

It was a small, domed chamber with whitewashed walls. In the middle of the floor was the tomb, a sarcophagus shaped like an old-fashioned cradle, covered with a pall of rich blue velvet, heavily edged with gold fringe and great gold tassels. At the head of the tomb was a huge fez. Four tall brass candlesticks were placed, one at each angle.

"In Turkish days candles would have been burning in them," said the Consul.

"What an odd-looking fez," I said.

"Oh, that! It's a Bektashi fez. The Holy man must have belonged to the Dervish order of the Bektashi, one of the secret sects, and a most powerful one."

"How would you like to go and call on a real live Holy man?" he added.

I jumped at the proposal, and, taking farewell of the keeper of the tomb, we plunged forthwith down the nearest lane into the Turkish quarter, through the street of the cordwainers, past that of the wheelwrights, and the workers in bronze until we came to the great main artery of the bazaar—the street which had been roofed over before the advent of the Serbs.

Along this we moved, permeated by the atmosphere of the place, walking in true Oriental fashion slowly in the middle of the road, as if time were of no consequence. Grave turbaned men saluted us as we passed with a courtly bow and smile. The Consul was evidently well known in the Turkish quarter—"*Salaam effendi bey—Salaam aleikum.*" Elderly gentlemen,

sitting cross-legged in open cafés, smoking the everlasting cigarette, or playing chess, looked up occasionally as we passed. Sellers of sherbert and boza perambulated around calling their wares. At every corner a dealer in sweetmeats had his stall. Jews, Greeks, Albanians, dervishes of the various orders, veiled women, green-turbaned pilgrims from Mecca, sheiks and other holy men were everywhere in evidence. Had it not been for the occasional presence of a Serbian gendarme one might easily have thought one was still under the sway of the Turk.

The Consul stopped suddenly.

"It is round here," he said, pointing to a mud wall at the corner of a side turning.

Picking our steps we came on a low building with a curved iron grille along one side.

"This is the tomb of the saint which the Baba we are going to visit takes care of," he said.

We looked in, and saw in the light of the candles a tomb, rather more elaborate than the one we had just left, surrounded by an iron railing, to which numerous strips of paper were attached.

"These are prayers to the saint, verses from the Koran placed there by devotees desiring a cure for some bodily ailment," explained the Consul.

A few steps further on we came to a little flagged courtyard, shaded by a plane tree, and having a well with a marble trough full of water against it. A low verandahed building faced the well, and, as we arrived, an acolyte was trimming the wicks of the hanging boat-shaped lamps depending from the verandah, preparatory to sunset.

"This is the 'Tekkah,' a sort of small monastery or hermitage where the Baba, the keeper of the tomb, lives with his one or two disciples. I wonder if the holy man is at home. He promised to visit me some months ago; but I have not seen him since I called last," he said.

As he spoke we stepped on to the bare wooden verandah, and the acolyte came forward to meet us. To our enquiry he answered that the holy man was within; and thereupon we began to take off our foot-gear. The Consul's leggings and laced boots were easy; but my high rubber top-boots, even with the willing help of the acolyte, proved more difficult. Eventually, however, between us we got them off; and in stockinged feet we proceeded through the small entry into the audience chamber.

This was a low square room, panelled in dark wood, lit by small square windows on three sides, the front looking on to the verandah, the others into a little garden behind. On the dark polished floor a number of sheepskin rugs were scattered; and round three sides of the room ran a low divan eight inches from the ground, padded with long cushions covered with blue-and-white checked cotton.

Seated cross-legged on the divan in the far corner was the holy man, and to him I was ceremoniously introduced by the Consul in the flowery manner of the East. After this we were seated. I was placed cross-legged on the Baba's right on the divan, the Consul on his left, another visitor, who came in after us, a little further off on the Consul's left.

When we entered he was smoking a cigarette. A little square brass brazier stood on the floor in front of him; and from this the acolyte took a live coal in a pair of quaint iron tongs, and held it up to each of us that we might also light our cigarettes.

These preliminaries settled, the Consul and the holy man, evidently old friends, entered into a lively conversation, whilst I occupied myself in observing the surroundings.

The room itself pleased me immensely. After the tumbled untidiness I had lately got accustomed to, its rigid spotless monastic beauty came with an unexpected charm. The few sheepskins on the floor heightened the

polished beauty of it. The quaint diamond beading all across the ceiling seemed just the appropriate decorative note suitable to the room. Even the round dome-like sheet-iron stove in the middle of the room, with its angled stove-pipe, did not look out of place. The absence of chairs and tables made for an air of spaciousness.

But it was chiefly the holy man himself that I was interested in, sitting in his dark robes, very eloquent with his slender hands, his high dark aristocratic bearded face surmounted by a yellow domed cap, round which was a brown turban. It was a wonderful dignified old face, calm with the calm of certainty, unruffled by the swirling tide of events around him, unspotted from the world. The eyes were the eyes of a child, trustful, confident. It was a strangely attractive face.

Before our entry he had evidently been writing, for the implements of the craft were round him, paper, a stylus, a block of Indian ink, a shallow bowl of water. I gathered that he had been busy writing appropriate verses from the Koran on strips of paper, which were bought, by the seekers after health at the saint's tomb, as charms against all evil. Apparently these were his main source of income, and obviously the old man had a touching faith in their efficacy. I had been introduced to him as the English hakim (doctor), and he accepted me at once as a brother healer, although of a distinctly lower order.

To his courteous enquiry as to how I liked Uskub, I replied in the time-worn formula :—

"The air is pure, the soil is good, and the water is excellent."

"Ah, yes," he answered quickly. "The soil is as musk; but the people who dwell there have defiled it like Jerusalem dogs."

Whether he was referring to the Serbs or not, it was difficult to say. His mind was so detached, it is possible he did not know of their dominance.

Presently the acolyte approached him with a quaint old brown tray, on which were four tiny cups and the implements for making coffee. From the tray he took a small copper pot full of water, shaped like a double egg-cup and having a long handle. This he placed carefully amid the hot embers of the brazier, and proceeded to make the coffee, which when ready he poured into the four tiny cups.

As the acolyte brought them round I watched the Consul. He took his cup in his right hand, after previously touching his lips and forehead with his fingers in acknowledgment.

When it came to my turn I did the same.

The Consul smiled at me.

"You drink it in one or two gulps, quickly, to show how much you like it," he said. "There must be no lingering. That would suggest it was not good, and would be impolite."

As a matter of fact it was excellent, which was rather surprising, as there was practically no pure coffee in Uskub at the time, the stuff sold as such being composed mainly of burnt wheat. After we had gone through the ceremony we fell into desultory talk. The old man's conversation was an extraordinary mixture of fact, fiction and distorted history. I can remember he told us a long story about "Iskander" (Alexander the Great), and "Daria" (Darius), evidently looking upon these as former Mohammedan saints. There was another story about Constantine, the two partridges, and the Bosphorus, which I have forgotten. It was a most muddled medley. Finally we got up to leave; and at the last he gave us his blessing:—

"I commend you to God's keeping. Come again soon to see me," he said gently.

Then we started for home.

"I shall have to revise most of my ideas about dervishes after to-day," I said thoughtfully, as we made our way over the Vardar bridge.

The Consul smiled.

"Most people have to on closer acquaintance. The ordinary English idea is founded on the Mad Mullah, and pictures of hoards of fanatics sweeping down on a square of British troops in the desert."

Late that night, on the Serbian Christmas Eve, the Chief returned safely from Salonika, bringing an elaborate supply of fresh rumours with him, rumours which a knowledge of the place made us more and more chary of accepting.

The important thing for us, however, was that he had managed also to bring back with him £800 in gold, wrapped up in his canteen tin; and we now felt that we should be able to pay our way should we have to trek through Montenegro or Albania, when we wanted to return to England in the spring, in case the worst came, and the Bulgars really did declare war and cut us off from Salonika.

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Next morning was the Serbian Christmas, and very early we were made aware of it. For it seemed to be the custom that everyone possessing any sort of gun should let it off as frequently as possible throughout the day.

Early in the morning we were wakened by salvoes, irregular firings, solitary shots from every quarter at rapidly recurring intervals. There were great quantities of captured Austrian rifles everywhere, and masses of ammunition. Everyone seemed to have a gun, everyone seemed to think he should make, if possible, more noise than his neighbour.

I asked Peter Petrovitch, a friend of our orderlies, why they did so. Peter had been in America, and spoke good United States talk very fluently. He explained that the Serbian Christmas dish was roast sucking pig, and that the moment the pig is put on the fire to roast,

it is the correct thing to fire a gun. Every shot should mean another roast sucking pig. We both agreed, however, that there could not be so many thousand roast pigs in all Serbia as we had heard reports in Uskub.

"I guess they're just doing it for fun," said Peter.

There was a fire burning in the hospital courtyard, to which the Serbian bolnitchers at intervals supplied little logs of oak. This fire they had started on the night before, and it was most important that the oak logs should never be allowed to burn out before Christmas morn. This oak log was called the "Badnyak."

"I understand about the 'Badnyak'," I said to Peter. "But what is all this about scattering wheat on it?"

"Oh, wheat! The 'Polasnik,' he scatters it."

"But who is the 'Polasnik'?" I said, rather more puzzled.

Peter seemed surprised I did not know.

"Why the 'Polasnik' is the first person to cross the door on Christmas Day. He scatters wheat on the log—the 'Badnyak'—burning on the hearth, and then he says:—

'Christ is born,' and the people of the house they answer:—'He is born indeed.'"

He looked at me gravely.

"When you go to the hospital to-day, you will be 'Polasnik.' You will say to the first wounded man you meet: 'Christ is born'; and he will answer: 'He is born indeed.' It is most important."

"I see," I answered.

We found it impossible to get any work done in the hospital that day. Because it was Christmas, the bolnitchers and the patients simply couldn't understand that we wished to carry on as usual. Accordingly we did essential dressings only, leaving the others to the following day, when things would have quieted down again to normal.

The afternoon found us free, therefore, and as it was a beautiful clear day, the Consul, Steve and I decided to climb "Gornovaldo," the mountain at whose base the city of Uskub lay.

Except for ourselves the mountain was almost deserted. Occasional small flocks of sheep, led by an old ram with a bell round his neck, ambled across our track. Occasionally a shepherd boy in his sheepskin coat and cap called them shrilly.

There were two villages on the slope, and as we drew near the lower the skirl of bagpipes came to us fitfully.

"Bagpipes are the national musical instruments of these mountaineers," said the Consul. "They're having a dance probably."

Presently we came upon the village, a miserable collection of mud hovels perched on wooden props against the mountain side. A winding dirty lane led through it, with small maize stacks on either side, elevated on wooden props to keep the rats away. The sound of the music grew clearer and clearer. Turning a corner we came upon its origin, the stone cloister of the village church, where the girls and boys of the little hamlet were slowly dancing the "Kola," swaying backwards and forwards, with hands on each others shoulders in a broken circle, to the music of the pipes. They stopped shyly on our arrival; and as the day was waning we did not tarry, but pushed on up the winding track to the higher more important village of Gornovaldo, a couple of miles beyond. A rickety wooden bridge led over a ravine; and here we found a sentry posted, armed with an old Martini rifle, a villainous-looking person with ectropion of his right eyelid, a condition which did not improve his already forbidding countenance. In spite of his appearance, however, he was a most placid individual.

Steve insisted on examining his rifle, saying "*dobra, dobra,*" (good, good,) his one Serbian word, to the

man's great satisfaction. Apparently he recognised us, for, as he explained to the Consul, he had recently been a patient at the hospital, and we had done him a lot of good.

The climbing now became stiffer. We saw the second village, white houses against the grey, quite close; but the path wound serpentine, and short cuts proved breathless enterprises to people out of condition through want of exercise for months.

"In Turkish times the various Consuls used to take houses here during the heat of summer. I have one or two friends we might visit," said the Consul.

He led the way through the village, turning round to the left, along a path overlooking a space like a quarry hole in which were two or three houses, whose red-tiled roofs came about level with the path. One of these houses was our objective. The owner evidently saw us before we arrived, and came out to meet us, dressed in the regulation Albanian trousers and jacket, with a small black conical cap over a face, battered and wrinkled by the sun and rain and wind of fifty years.

With true Serbian politeness, he made us free at once of his home and the best that it contained. The house was built on props, and was reached by a rickety ladder leading to a verandah. It was a single-storied place, built of sun-dried bricks, and consisted of one room with a small window in the gable, and a door leading on to the verandah. The floor was of tramped clay. With the exception of a stove and two cradles, each with a baby, there was practically no furniture in the house. As there was nothing for us to sit on, they produced a roll of straw matting, and on this we squatted. Neighbours now began to arrive, each bringing a three-legged stool, and soon we were in conversation with them, the old peasant, a thin woman his wife, his son, and a fat snub-nosed young woman who suckled a baby as she sat joining nonchalantly in the talk.

As it was Christmas day we went through the special salutations once again; and there was much lightning crossing of the breast at each mention of the Deity. Then a large amphora of red wine appeared, and everyone had to fill his glass. The talk grew more and more. The Consul was evidently telling them about the great war with the Austrians. Apparently they knew almost nothing about it. What puzzled them was that Austria, which was a Christian country, should be fighting them. Surely Austria was a friend. Now, if it had been the Turk. They all understood about the Turk. But the Austrians. That was a puzzle. And that the Turks should be with the Austrians more puzzling still. They could not understand.

In the midst of the talk, the thin woman re-appeared with a frying pan full of little squares of very salt roast pork. These we picked out hot from the pan, and ate with our fingers. Last of all came walnuts ready cracked; and the feast was over. We ate of everything, and praised everything; the hospitality was so genuine, so unaffected. At length we got up to say farewell, wishing to get back before dark.

When we reached the outskirts of the village, on the way down, the sun was sinking, and for a moment we paused. Far below, the broad triangular valley lay outspread between us and the Black Mountain, beyond which the Bulgar kept watch and ward. Across it the great river wound in coils, its waters burnished to a dull copper by the setting sun. From where we stood the red roofs of the huddled houses, the tall white minarets, the rounded domes of the mosques, the great white and red battlements of the fortress, made the city look more like a fairy vision, so unsubstantial did it seem, than the malodorous reality we knew it to be.

"It is like that with every Eastern city," said the Consul. "Romance is always in the distance."

"Oh well. Romance is what happened yesterday, what is going to happen to-morrow, never what is

happening to-day. Romance is always just round the corner," I answered.

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A few days later came news of another impending great Austrian invasion. The shelling of Belgrade had recommenced; and frontier fighting along the Danube and the Save was getting more frequent. It became necessary, therefore, to evacuate as rapidly as possible the hospitals nearer the front; and, as we were full, we received orders to send three hundred and fifty cases, that could be moved, down the line to Bitolia (Monastir), so that we, in turn, could take in fresh wounded from the front.

Naturally we hated this; for indeed there is nothing the civilian surgeon dislikes so much, at first, as the constant military necessity which compels him to evacuate his cases when they are just beginning to get better. It is all work, and nothing to show for it. But it is inevitable.

We therefore set about selecting such cases as we thought suitable. The Sanitary Train was due to arrive on the Sunday evening, and all the case sheets had to be ready by then.

It was on the Saturday afternoon that the Little Red Woman sprang her idea. She suggested to the Major that the Medical Officer of the Ambulance Train would have more than he could manage; and offered to go with Barclay to help to look after our section on the way. The Major smiled paternally. The Little Red Woman was a great favourite of his. His own daughter, had she lived, would have been about her age.

"So," he said chaffingly. "You want to look at the pretty things in the shops at Salonique. Well, you deserve a little holiday. If the Colonel agrees, it is settled."

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Sunday was a beautiful day, like an early summer morning in England; and Sherlock and I wandered round all the afternoon amongst the Turkish graveyards on the outskirts of the city. There were so many of them in every quarter, that always, when I think of Uskub, I have a vision of graveyards. Most of them seemed to be centuries old, for the graves were covered with green, and the headstones weather-worn to illegibility. No attempt at regularity was anywhere apparent. There were no paths, no flowers, no fences around the graves, no levelling of any kind. What one saw was a bare green hillside, with irregular white headstones at every angle, projecting anyhow, like broken dragons' teeth all over the surface. The tombstone of a man was usually surmounted by a carved fez. Women had some conventional design instead. The graveyards seemed utterly neglected. It was no one's business to attend to them. Consequently, when anyone wanted a number of flag stones to pave a courtyard, or make a path, he took an ox-waggon to the nearest graveyard, dug up as many tombstones as he required, and carted them off without a single by-your-leave to anyone.

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Our convoy was due to start on Monday morning, at eleven, for Monastir, and we said good-bye overnight to those we were loth to part with, wishing them God-speed and a quick recovery. It should have been a fine day on Monday; but, of course, it started to rain steadily, remorselessly, as soon as the first batch of stretchers left the hospital. Nevertheless the evacuation proceeded methodically, for there is one thing the Serbian staff can do thoroughly, and that is move men quickly, handle masses, clear areas. The military machine is thoroughly efficient.

When we went over to see the train it was already half

filled. I looked into one carriage. It had eight narrow bunks projecting athwart the carriage, two-thirds across. These were occupied by lying-down cases. All along the remaining side ran a long wooden bench on which some twenty men, sitting-up cases, with fractured arms and other injuries were packed close together. Steve and I looked at them.

"Lord. I'm glad I'm not going," he said "When I think of how tired I got on the way up after twelve hours in a comfortable railway carriage, quite fit and well, and remember that these poor devils will have to sit close packed for twenty-four hours—. The Serb peasant is a marvel."

Moving on, we found a group assembled round the Little Red Woman, wrapped up warmly for the journey, all smiles and dimples at the thought of the holiday she was about to have—the first real one since the war started five months before.

With her were Barclay, Lieutenant Joritch our adjutant, and Lieut.-Colonel Marketitch the P.M.O. of the train. After we had been introduced, the Colonel brought us round to his quarters in the train. Here we found two ladies, the Colonel's wife, once a well-known beauty, and a large person with a very opulent figure, a Russian lady doctor from Kraguievatz, wearing a very beautifully tight-fitting tailor-made costume of Austrian grey, which I caught the Little Red Woman studying surreptitiously. The lady was very much at home, obviously very proud of her figure, and was seated in such a way as to display a generous expanse of leg encased in brilliant canary yellow stockings, finished off by very high-heeled French patent leather shoes—truly an extraordinary exotic bird in such surroundings. Knowing our Little Red Woman, I could see she was already bristling like a terrier in the presence of a strange cat; but the big woman was totally unconscious of the effect she was producing, and greeted her effusively as a fellow country-woman.

"What do you think of my costume?" she said presently.

"It is very chic," replied the Little Red Woman shortly; and then, her curiosity requiring to be satisfied, she added: "But where did you get the material?"

"Oh," she replied airily, "I commandeered the overcoats of three Austrian prisoners, and had it made up by a tailor in Belgrade."

"You took the winter overcoats of three prisoners!" gasped the Little Red Woman, horrified.

"Yes. The dirty 'Schwabski,' I did," she answered defiantly. Then the Little Red Woman turned her back on her deliberately, and we knew it was war to the knife.

Barclay and I grinned at one another sheepishly.

"Hope you'll all have a good time," I said cheerfully.

"Hope springs eternal in the human breast," he murmured.

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We felt rather lonely without them in the hospital that morning, but by the afternoon we had recovered, for Steve, who had previously bought a Zeiss binocular for two pounds, was now negotiating for a Mannlicher which James had discovered, and it was like a comedy to watch the bargaining.

The putative owner was a Serbian bandit, one of a corps of komitadgi raised to harry the Bulgarian frontier. He was a most villainous-looking ruffian, with a large bulbous plum-coloured nose, the result of a gunshot wound of the face which had somehow caused obstruction to the venous return. He wanted eighty dinars, rather less than three pounds, for the rifle and three hundred rounds of ammunition. How he obtained it we did not ask. Obviously, if it belonged

to anyone, it was the property of the Serbian government. But it was a beauty, and Steve, who had an absolute mania for collecting firearms, was very tempted.

Stretton and I, after trying the gun and finding it perfect, left them haggling, and went off to operate.

It was a long tiring afternoon. We were in the theatre for over five hours, and when we had finished it was nearly dinner-time. Barclay and the Little Red Woman, we knew, were now about half way to Salonika; Steve, we found, had gone to bed with a severe attack of neuralgia, and the mess would be very small and quiet in consequence.

Suddenly Stretton and I felt that we could not possibly endure dining at home that evening.

"I'm chock full of chloroform, hanging over those rotten septic cases of yours," he said querulously.

"I'm afraid Charlie is going to perpetrate roast lamb for the fifth time in succession," I answered peevishly. Then I had an inspiration. "Let's go to the Drinoski, and see the pictures," I said.

"Done," said Stretton with sudden alacrity.

None of us had ever been to the "Drinoski"; but we knew it was the centre of fashion in Uskub. We had heard of it from the Paget Unit, many of whom often dined there. To it came nightly the elite of the city, the staff officers, high officials and their wives, to sip their wine after dinner, listen to the Tzigane orchestra and watch the cinema. When we came to think of it, we felt it was odd we had never yet been.

It was a temporary wooden structure, on a flat piece of ground on the far side of the Vardar bridge, under the shadow of the Citadel. When we got there a bright light was burning outside the entrance, and in the box-office we found the "Magaziner" of our hospital—an official corresponding to the Quartermaster of an English military unit. He greeted us cheerfully; and then we found to our surprise he was the proprietor.

Running the stores of our hospital was apparently only his "war work," for he was said to be one of the wealthiest men in Uskub.

The restaurant itself was a long, single-storied building, decorated in white and gold, lit by electric light. Little tables, covered with white napery, were arranged in long parallel rows. There was a musicians' gallery over the entrance, in which the gipsy orchestra and cinema operator were placed. A white screen covered the far wall.

The room was full of gold-laced officers, Serbian ladies, and well-to-do civilians. It was an ordinary, very ordinary restaurant of the Austrian bier halle type; but after our Spartan existence it seemed magnificent to us. We both gasped. We had no idea Uskub could rise to such luxuries.

"Why, they've got decent tablecloths, and actually table-napkins. Haven't seen a napkin for months," said Stretton.

Of course everyone knew us, as we threaded our way looking for a table. We saw our Serbian Colonel, the General, some of his staff, a few men from the Russian and Italian consulates. Mingled with these were a good many civilians, and several Serbian N.C.O.'s and privates, for Serbia is, as I have said, a truly democratic country. We even saw one of our bolnitchers taking a sestra out for the evening on the strength of tips he had made in the hospital.

Two men in khaki from the Paget Unit hailed us, and we joined them at their table. To have a real menu presented to us, have a real waiter hanging round, a real wine steward indicating what vintages he recommended, seemed almost like a dream. It did not matter that the menu was printed in Serbian, which we could not read. It did not matter that the wines probably had never seen France. The warmth, the light, the laughter, the music, the civilising effect of snowy linen, burnished silver, was more than enough to cheer

our flagging spirits. We thoroughly enjoyed ourselves.

When nine o'clock came the tables were cleared, and those who did not wish to see the cinema departed. The lights were lowered, and the pictures commenced. It was a curious show. All the pictures were German. The stories were of the most sugary sentimental German type. Even the descriptive explanations were in German. The Serb audience sat through it all quietly. The orchestra in the background played queer melancholy Slav music. Everyone was very still.

At the end came the solemn Russian National Anthem, and everyone stood rigid to attention. It stopped. A few bars followed, and then there was a stir amongst the audience. Eyes glistened, cheeks flushed, hearts began to beat exultantly. It was the Serbian Hymn. The wave of emotion swept over and enveloped us also, for were we not with them in their wonderful struggle.

The music ceased, and with it the tension suddenly relaxed. People shook themselves as if after a dream, moved, smiled at their neighbours, prepared to go. Chatter broke out again.

We moved in a body towards the door. A whisper and a nod came from one of the Serbian staff; and quite suddenly and unexpectedly the orchestra broke out again. At the first bar, automatically, we stopped rigid. The chatter had ceased. Everyone was looking at us with friendly eyes. The band was playing "God save the King."

It was months since we had heard it. We were all taken by surprise. Emotions were very near the surface, you will remember, in those days, and I felt a lump rising in my throat, a queer moisture in my eyes. As it chanced there were some eight or ten of us close together near the exit; and suddenly behind me one of the Paget orderlies, a Cambridge undergrad., began to sing in a clear tenor voice. Quickly we all joined in. The people around stood watching us. They did not

understand a word; but they made us feel they were with us.

Then we marched out in a body, saluting the General, everyone answering our salute, rigid as we passed.

"I'm glad we went. It has been a splendid night," said Stretton, as we went back in the darkness through the mud to our quarters on the other side of the Vardar.

CHAPTER VIII

GATHERING SHADOWS

A proclamation to the Macedonians—A night stroll and some curious happenings—The mystery of the wounded Turk—Monastir and its hospitals—The grim reason why we gave up operating on Hungarians—The " Blessing of the Waters "—An unexpectedly successful operation—What happened to the lost case—Stretton gets relapsing fever—A Royal visit and its sequel—How the " Sergeant " tried to fight a duel—More trouble with the Little Red Woman—Stretton goes home.

THE First of January (old style) marked a new political era in Southern Serbia. On that date a grandiloquent announcement appeared in all the papers, stating that now the yoke of the Turk had been lifted permanently from the shoulders of the Macedonian Serbs, and they had been recovered into the historical fold of the race, the King, touched by their loyalty, desired no longer to look upon them as a conquered province, but as an integral part of Serbia Magna. In consequence of this, and on the advice of his ministers and Parliament, he therefore promulgated a decree, and desired that it should be carried and pronounced throughout all the land of Southern Serbia, that, from that day forthwith, the inhabitants thereof should be accorded all the rights and privileges of Serbian citizenship, with powers to elect representatives to the national Skupshtina, to ensure that their own particular interests should be adequately protected.

To celebrate the occasion, national rejoicings were ordered; flags flew from all the official buildings; and the city was to be illuminated at night.

Accordingly, after dinner, Steve and I sallied out to

see the illuminations. The main street from the station to the bridge was dead. A number of kerosene lamps arranged along the river front and on the bridge, half of them blown out by the wind, burnt feebly. A few people wandered round aimlessly. There did not seem to be any wild enthusiasm about. We were puzzled.

"Let's look up Marko, the sentry," I said.

We advanced cautiously.

"*Stani! Ko, Idé,*" came the challenge.

"*Preyateli,*" we answered, as we saw him coming from the sentry-box on our side of the bridge.

"Good evening, misters," he said.

"Evening, Marko," said Steve. "Say, I have a hunch we've missed the big-drum stunt. When does the circus commence?"

Marko smiled grimly.

"Believe me," he said, "there ain't goin' to be no circus this trip, boss."

We were all standing at ease near the corner of the bridge. No one was about, and Marko seemed in a conversational mood. A slight sound made him turn. A solitary Turk was coming quietly over the incline of the arches; and at the sight of him, all the good humour fled from Marko's face.

Without a word to us he was round in a flash, and had made for the Turk. There was a sharp rapid interchange of words, a quick jerk on Marko's part, a rapid retreat on that of the Turk, and presently the sentry was back again, smiling, with something in his hand. It was a wicked-looking curved dagger with a mother of pearl handle.

"That makes twenty-three to-night," he said. "Orders are to disarm all Turks."

"Why?" I said.

"Orders," he answered.

The night was young, and we felt disinclined to return; so presently we strolled over the bridge to the

Turkish side. The lamps placed along the river frontage threw pale wavering streaks on the leaden gurgling water. High up on the left the lights of the Citadel twinkled feebly. A few street lamps at long intervals cast pale circles on the uneven cobbles. No one seemed to be about; but behind the dark blinds of several cafés we could hear the sound of stringed music.

Suddenly from one of these, three men tumbled hurriedly into the street, followed by a pathway of light from the open door. The sound of a revolver shot followed. The men seemed to melt away; but from somewhere near a blue gendarme equally suddenly sprang into life. It was like a shadow picture to us. We could see the outline of his peaked cap, his short nose, his upturned chin, the curve of his neck, sharply silhouetted against the light. We saw his arm go up and then there came three reports in quick succession, and the door banged to again.

"That was a Colt automatic. Guess I'd know the bark of it anywhere," said Steve excitedly.

"He didn't waste much time making up his mind," I said.

"Huh," said Steve. "It's always a good rule to get a 'bead' on the other fellow first. It's better for your Insurance Company. Wonder what in Hades the racket was all about."

"I don't mind betting you'll never hear," I said.

We didn't.

Next day, however, just before lunch, a well-to-do Turk came staggering into hospital, helped by his friends, his right hand, wrapped in a handkerchief, dripping blood all the way up the stairs.

Taking the improvised dressing off, I had a look at the hand, to find that only the thumb and half the palm was left, the four fingers and rest of the palm having been torn off, leaving a horrible bleeding stump of projecting bones, torn flesh and strings of tendon. I asked no questions. A surgeon, especially when he is

busy, is not a curious person. But the man's friends volunteered the information that it had happened that morning. They said that he had been putting wood into his stove, and somehow or other an explosion had occurred, and this was the result.

I made no comment on the story, but after dressing the wound, told the man, if he came back in the afternoon at three o'clock, I would give him chloroform and fix the thing properly. All the while the patient said nothing. Now he merely nodded assent; smiled gravely at me, and they led him away.

But he did not turn up that afternoon.

When I asked the Major, next day, if he knew anything of him, he answered smoothly:

"Oh, yes. He was detained by the military authorities as he left the hospital, and asked to account for the bomb. When the examination is complete, he will, no doubt, return to you for further treatment."

But he never did return. I made no more enquiries. I had a feeling that further questions would be unwelcome. I rather fancy he was shot that afternoon.

It was, of course, as the mining engineer's predictions suggested to me, probably only an episode of the general unrest following the proclamation. Serbia was in deadly need of fresh recruits for her woefully depleted army, but these Macedonians were not willing conscripts, many of them being pro-Turk or pro-Bulgar in their sympathies, many more simply hating the thought of being "called up," most of them not at all eager to fight for anyone.

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The absence of the three hundred and fifty cases that Barclay and the Little Red Woman were accompanying to Monastir made our work for the following week considerably easier. The fact that fresh cases were not arriving in any quantity gave us time to consider more

carefully the treatment of those we had. James, the invaluable, our Austrian interpreter, had got his bolnitchers into something like working order. The beds had been numbered, and we could put our hands on any case required. A special area of sixty beds had been reserved for fresh operation cases, so that it was no longer possible to lose sight of a patient amongst our fifteen hundred odd. Altogether we were much happier in our arrangements. We were able now to do a morning round of the operation cases, and dress them in bed, leaving the orderlies to carry on until we had finished. Several of the Serbian sestras too, had by this time acquired quite an intelligent usefulness; one of them in particular took it upon herself to look after my cases especially. To her I was the "*Velik gospodin doktor.*" She informed me her name was "Sestra Pava."

At first, any sestra who happened to be handy used to come along with me, when I started my round; but after she had adopted me they were given to understand their presence was no longer required. I was her property, and they might just as well recognise the fact, once and for all. This suited me admirably. I found her extremely useful. Nothing was too much trouble, nothing was a bother to her.

She was a dimpled, pink-cheeked little woman, with a quick bustling manner, and very bad teeth. She looked quite pretty until she smiled. This worried me at first until I had an inspiration: I extracted all the bad ones, and taught her to smile without showing those that were left.

Every day we used to go round, she carrying my tray of dressings. Voluble conversations took place between her and the patients. The substance of these she communicated to me by a special combination of bad German, good Serbian, and excellent pantomime, which she considered the easiest method of reaching my intelligence. A certain amount of this information used to penetrate. Between what I knew I had done for the

patient, what I saw when I looked at his wounds, and what she tried to tell me about him, we got on quite satisfactorily.

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Meanwhile Sister Rowntree, who had been lent to us by the Paget Unit, had gradually begun to feel that she would like to come more frequently, perhaps even permanently. There was talk of the Paget Unit breaking up. Half of them had signed on for three months only, and their time was almost over. It was doubtful if the whole unit would not return, for fighting appeared to be over for the time, and it was unlikely the Austrians, fully occupied by the Russian advance in Galicia, would attempt another invasion of Serbia before the autumn. That meant, of course, that less and less new surgical work would find its way to Uskub, and what cases they had at their hospital would soon be exhausted. We, on the other hand, with 600 surgical beds had work and to spare before us for three months; and, as long as we kept our health, and escaped an epidemic in our dirty unsanitary buildings, were happy and contented. The surgical material was splendid. We were operating every day; and we found the sister absolutely invaluable. Naturally we wanted to keep her, if she could be spared, for a surgeon without a capable theatre nurse is like a one-armed man. Luckily she wanted to stay with us, feeling how utterly dependent we were on her.

And so it was arranged that she should come to us daily.

It was at this stage that Stretton developed a second attack of Relapsing Fever, after he had recovered completely from the first.

It came with characteristic suddenness. He was quite well and at work until tea-time. By eight o'clock he was lying delirious with a temperature of 104F.

I told Charlie, our fat Maltese cook, to make some

Benger's Food, sending a tin with directions to the kitchen by Anthony.

When I went, an hour later, wrathfully to find out why it had not arrived, I found him looking woefully at an unpalatable lumpy mess which would have made a mule sick. Benger's Food is a difficult thing to make, even when following the directions carefully. Charlie had been trying to make it by the light of nature, not being able to read a word of English. *Hinc illæ lacrimæ.*

Next day the patient was better; and, to our great joy, at night our wanderers returned from Monastir, bringing some very acceptable stores with them. I remember in particular twenty-four pots of jam, cheap stuff one would not have looked at in England, but to us veritable ambrosia. Living mainly on a meat and black bread ration, we were as greedy as children over that jam. Another thing they brought was table napkins. These made us feel quite civilised; and, when we discovered they were a present from the "Little Woman" to the mess, we insisted on toasting her, to her dimpled embarrassed pleasure.

Sitting round the wood fire after dinner, we called upon them to tell us their adventures.

"We got to Salonique soon after midnight," said Barclay. "That was because we did not want our wounded to be seen any more than was necessary. We left again in half an hour for Monastir. It seems to be a climb most of the way, as we had two engines, and the train had to be divided several times at steep gradients. It is a wonderful mountainous country with lakes, like the Highlands of Scotland. We arrived at Monastir in a snow storm; and there was nothing but ox-waggons to carry away the wounded. At the station there was a solitary fiacre, which we commandeered. Afterwards we found it had been sent for some high Serbian dignitary.

"The only decent hotel is the 'Bosnia,' and as we had

been living on salami, cheese, and wine for the greater part of two days, the first thing I asked for was a decent hot meal."

"He was most cross until he got it," said the Little Red Woman.

Barclay smiled. "I daresay I was. At any rate I was happier afterwards, and quite enjoyed sitting out on the balcony watching the Greek priests drinking liqueurs. It was then we saw our wounded passing in ox-waggons, the arm cases sitting up, the bad ones lying in the straw—all looking miserable.

"Nevertheless some of them saw us, and waved, smiling as they passed. It made me feel ashamed of my previous bad temper."

"What were the hospitals like?" I said.

"There were three of them—two Greek and a Serbian. We went to them all. The Serbian hospital was the old Turkish military one. It had been built just before the first Balkan war, and had never been occupied until now. It was quite modern—white wards with white cots, and a separate operating block, with anæsthetic room, theatre and observation wards all complete. We thought it splendid until we went along the corridors. They smelt like stables—no sanitary arrangements.

"The Commandant was very proud of his hospital. He took us into one room and showed us a number of packing cases, half opened."

"What are they?" said Dr Kadish.

"X-ray outfit," he told us proudly.

"But why are they not in use?" she said, surprised.

"Oh, Madam! They are too costly to experiment with. We do not understand them," he said with a shrug.

"It made me just ache to think of it. All that beautiful material, which we would have given our eyes to have had, still in the original packing cases, not being used by anyone, and us pining for it every day.

"Next morning we started back for Salonique. We had two days there as you know. We've spent all our money. And now I'm just dying to go to bed."

Next day I examined a Magyar (Hungarian) prisoner. I had to do so, much as a veterinary surgeon would, for he seemed almost incapable of making himself understood. We had only one bolnitcher, a Roumanian Serb, who could speak Hungarian; for even James, our polyglot Austrian interpreter, had never attempted this difficult language. I asked questions of James in English. These were translated by him into Serbian. The bolnitcher turned them into Hungarian. And so the man was interrogated. But to all my queries he was apathetically dumb. The bolnitcher could make nothing of him. It was impossible, therefore, to make out how the condition had arisen. All I knew was that he had a huge abdominal dropsy, and it was getting steadily worse.

I told the bolnitcher to tell him that I proposed operating. He neither consented nor refused. When I tapped him I drew off fifteen pints of fluid. Even then I could find no obvious cause for the accumulation. In a few days I tried to question him again; but he was as unresponsive as ever. Obviously he had made up his mind to die. His spirit, I think, was utterly broken. He was a stranger in a strange land, hated by the Serbs, hated even by the Roumanians and Austrians, his fellow countrymen, who could not understand his language. He died quite quietly, a week later.

When I said to the Little Red Woman I wished that I had done a "Talma-Morrison" on him, she answered:—

"What would have been the good? He would have died in any case. All the Magyars we operate on die. They've been half starved until they have no resistance left before we see them. Then when we do operate, and they cannot feed themselves, they die. No Serb will feed them."

"Good God!" I exclaimed, "I remember now being told so before. But why?"

"What would you?" she said. "They are credited with all the awful atrocities committed on Serb women in the Valievo district last September, and even the Czechs with them will not associate. I know it is awful; but I cannot any righteous indignation over them get up."

"And so they die," I said.

"Yes," she answered shortly.

After that I operated on no more Hungarians, unless they asked me to do so, and I could make sure they would be able to feed themselves afterwards.

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Two days after the return from Monastir came Epiphany morn, which in countries under the Orthodox Church is almost as important as Christmas. On that day the ceremony of "*The Blessing of the Waters*" takes place; and on the night before, a stand was erected for the annual ceremony on the eastern side of the Vardar, close to the bridge.

All morning, from eight o'clock onwards, guns boomed in salvoes of three from the saluting battery in the Citadel; and people started to collect along the river bank to see the proceedings. About nine o'clock two long processions began to converge on the scene of the ceremony. The Archbishop from the Cathedral headed one, the Metropolitan from the Church of St. Demetrius the other.

All the priests were in full canonicals, very gorgeous; and every one in the procession held lighted tapers, the priests carrying banners, swinging censers, chanting solemn hymns as they marched. Detachments of troops held the streets clear. Every one from the General Officer Commanding to the most humble official was present.

The supreme moment came when the Archbishop, mounting the grand-stand, raised a great silver-gilt crucifix over his head, and cast it into the river.

Immediately it touched the water, a number of men and boys, ready waiting, dived after it, and brought it back in triumph to the stand again. Then the Archbishop took it once more; and now he dipped it into a huge tank of water which stood before him, thus making the water holy.

This was the signal for a rush forward by the crowd, carrying cups, jugs, etc., each bent on getting some of the precious water. Leaning down towards the supplicants, the priests on the stand crossed their breasts and touched their foreheads with green twigs dipped in the holy water. So it went on till everyone was satisfied.

Gradually the people began to disperse; and we, who had been looking on, returned to hospital to resume the routine of the day.

Our beds by this date were all filled up again, and we were busy once more. Freshly wounded men had ceased to arrive, and our greatest trouble now was the number of compound fractured thighs we had to treat. These unfortunate cases came down to us in a horrible condition, usually in short lateral splints, always septic, and mostly with from three to five inches of shortening, because no extension had ever been applied to their limbs.

Having no proper splints, and no extension apparatus, we had to improvise long Liston's by fastening two laths of wood together into a splint reaching from the armpit to below the heel. By this means we were able to reduce the deformity considerably; but the patients hated and dreaded these splints, because they had to lie flat in them, and it was very difficult to feed themselves in bed. Moreover, as they were not nursed at all, they developed bed-sores rapidly; and, worst of all, as there were no sanitary arrangements in the hos-

Plate VIII. The Blessing of the Waters (p. 180).

pital, they had to be carried downstairs daily, by none too careful stretcher bearers, to an outside latrine, until we thought of having tin bed-pans made in the Turkish quarter for their use. That improved matters considerably. Even still, however, patients would persist in loosening the bandages round their chests and pelves, so that they could sit up for food; and as a consequence the ends of the fragments naturally got out of position again, and every night we had two or three cases of secondary hemorrhage.

Our English night orderly grew quite accustomed to this. He used to apply a tourniquet, and stand by till the messenger fetched one or other of us. Often it meant a night operation on a blanched man, too weak already to stand it. The death-rate was higher, therefore, than one cared to think about.

In the daytime moreover, when we were at our busiest, with a full programme of operations enough to keep us to nightfall, it was not uncommon to have an urgent message from the hospital that they were sending over another secondary hemorrhage, which would arrive, with an orderly hanging on to the artery, at the theatre door in the middle of an amputation.

I think we must have tied practically every main artery in the body except the aorta, innominates and common iliacs, many times over. The brachial was by far the most common; but the number of posterior tibials was quite extraordinary. It is a difficult, rather pretty artery to tie, and at first I enjoyed doing it, but I soon got tired after I had done several. The popliteal and the femoral were common; the third stage of the subclavian and the external carotid, less so. The lingual and the facial occupied us on several occasions.

And all the while we knew that, with a little care, most of these could have been avoided; and if we had possessed a hundred Thomas' splints we need not have had thirty per cent. of our deaths. Of course it was nobody's fault. The Serbs had less than four hundred

doctors and practically no surgical equipment when war broke out; many of the doctors had been killed in the first two months, and the rest were permanently overworked.

The worst of it was, that, after a successful ligature, gangrene would sometimes occur in the devitalised limb, and then an amputation followed on the already excessive quantity we had to do for other causes. Everything was so septic that, no matter what precautions we took, primary union after amputation did not occur in more than twenty per cent.

But in spite of everything we got excellent results in many of the cases, occasionally, indeed, results that were surprisingly unlikely. One such case I can remember well. It was a compound fracture of the upper third of the left thigh bone, horribly septic. The man was a mere hollow-eyed skeleton with a running temperature of 100 to 102F. I begged him again and again to allow me to amputate his thigh. He absolutely refused. Then came a big hæmorrhage which bled him white. It was plugged and stopped, as he refused everything else. A second hæmorrhage occurred four days later. I was in the ward at the time, and stopped the hæmorrhage by digital pressure on his common femoral, while I talked to the man, explaining that if I took my thumb off his artery he would bleed to death. Eventually he consented to let me tie the artery, but refused to have chloroform, fearing I should seize the opportunity of amputating whilst he was unconscious. Then and there I tied the common femoral in bed, without an anæsthetic, and without any real antiseptic precautions. I expected the limb to become gangrenous. I was quite sure the operation wound would become septic. Instead, the incision healed by first intention, the limb remained warm, and the collateral circulation asserted itself. I irrigated the gunshot wounds for some time, and the patient eventually recovered with a limb only two inches shorter than the other. It was a

triumph of constitution over circumstances and experience.

As a matter of fact we eventually gave up trying to find the bleeding points in hæmorrhages in the forearm and leg, tying nothing smaller than the brachial in the arm, and the popliteal in the lower limb. Instead we used to enlarge the wound, irrigate thoroughly, push a drainage tube right through the limb, dress, and bandage up.

This treatment, besides saving a lot of time, proved most successful. We were very proud of it. Afterwards, when the English Medical Journals began to reach us, we found that a somewhat similar treatment had been evolved, independently, by our military medical officers in France; but that did not in the least diminish our satisfaction in our own originality. On the contrary, we looked upon it as an endorsement of the soundness of our judgment.

Of antiseptics, we possessed only Iodoform, Iodine, and Permanganate of Potash, but these proved invaluable. Sterilised dressings were, of course, out of the question. Continuous irrigation with saline was tried on a number of cases at one time, but the necessity for constant watchfulness and skilled supervision proved too much for our untrained staff. Things always went wrong; we had no nurses to depend upon; and the results were most unsatisfactory.

Conservative surgery was very difficult. Often we made valiant attempts to save limbs. Sometimes we succeeded, especially when helped by the patient. Often, however, such attempts turned out disastrously, because, not being able to cope with the enormous amount of dressings to be done, we could not give them all the attention they required afterwards. Sometimes we had curious surprises. I can remember one of the first, a leg I tried to save by gouging a long gutter in the tibia for osteomyelitis. Our old Major came along when I was doing it, shook his head and said "*Ampu-*

tatio." But I was determined to save that leg. I dressed the man myself for three days. Then he disappeared one morning; his bed was empty, and no one knew what had become of him. I went to look at the ten bodies lying in the mortuary, but he was not there. Steve, who had given me the anæsthetic for the case, was very interested.

"I guess, Father, he's a dead one all right. He's probably been buried already," he said cheerfully.

And, as the next few days passed without any sign of him, I had reluctantly to admit the likelihood of the conjecture. It was in the early period when we had no real control of the cases. We were very overworked at the time, and in a week I had forgotten all about him.

Two months later I was looking at a case of Typhus with Steve. "Well I'm jiggered," he said, "if that isn't your old tibia. There's your sign manual written all down it."

It turned out he had been shifted to another floor by mistake after a dressing, and so had been lost sight of until our attention was again drawn to him by Typhus. By all the laws of poetic justice, after he had made such a valiant struggle, he ought to have recovered from Typhus also. But, alas for poetic justice . . . he didn't.

It was about the time we were trying these conservative operations that Stretton fell ill with his third attack of Relapsing Fever. His previous ones had been sharp, but quickly recovered from. Nevertheless, his vitality had been lowered by them. He was much the oldest member of the unit, too old for such a hard life. As long as he was in good health he was full of energy, but as soon as he was attacked by the fever his years began to tell. He lay in bed all day. At night, after we had finished in the theatre, Sister Rowntree used to go in, take his temperature, make his bed comfortable, teach Charlie how to make invalid food for him. As a rule one or other of his friends from the Paget Unit used to look in on him during the day.

In spite of everything, however, he grew weaker daily, his temperature kept up, his mind grew more and more clouded, his lungs began to clog, he started to babble nonsense.

Then we got alarmed. The Sister said he really wanted two "specials" on him, night and day, if we hoped to save him, and that we must ask the Paget Unit to take him into their hospital.

That set us acting rapidly. It was a risk moving him, but we had to take it. The night was cold and bitter, but luckily there was no rain. Wrapping him up in blankets, we put him on a stretcher and carried him down the courtyard to a waiting fiacre outside. The stretcher was fixed lengthways, the Sister squeezed into the cab, I mounted alongside the driver, and we bumped slowly along the awful cobbled streets, with the patient groaning in the darkness.

At the other end, four stolid Austrians carried him to his sick-room. It was a little chamber, formerly used as a natural history class-room, containing large jars of snakes, skeletons of various ganoids, a huge stuffed eagle hanging from the roof, botanical charts on the walls, glass cases of small stuffed birds around. Stretton stared at these uncomprehendingly. I felt his pulse—a feeble running thing of 160—and wondered if he would live through the night.

The nursing saved him. Two days later he had his crisis. In a week we had him back home again, very feeble, very irritable, but keen as ever to continue his work. It was merely will power, however, that kept him going.

We had a quiet consultation.

"He's too old for this rough life," said the Chief decisively.

"He ought to go home. If he doesn't he'll die here. Someone will have to tell him so," said Sherlock.

But none of us liked to. We put him on light duty instead, asked him to give an occasional anæsthetic,

handed over the charge of some of our sick orderlies to him.

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The day after he came back we heard that we were to have a Royal visit on the morrow, and there was much polishing up in consequence. Uniforms were overhauled, buckles and buttons made to shine like gold, the quarters tidied up. We even attempted to make things at the hospital look more ship-shape.

The Royal train arrived at six a.m. We could see it from our courtyard. The visit, we were informed, was timed for 9 a.m. We saw our Major in his best uniform and sword, scabbard shining, arrive betimes.

We started work, looking up occasionally when we heard arrivals. Nothing happened, however, and we gradually forgot. After lunch, Barclay and I decided not to postpone an operation for arterio-venous aneurism we proposed doing on an Austrian prisoner. We finished our operation and went over to tea. Still nothing. The Major got very fussed. The Royal party he knew was in the city, and he could not think what had happened. In the evening the train steamed away. The visit to the city was over. We were forgotten.

Next day we learnt how it had happened. The Prince had asked for the English hospital, been taken to the Paget Unit, said the proper polite things, assumed that this was the only English unit in Uskub, and departed.

Our Major was intensely distressed, assured us it was no fault of his, told us he was sure no slight was meant, apologised as if he were responsible.

Such feelings as we had on our own account were those of relief, since we were so very conscious of the deficiencies of our hospital. But, for our old Major, we were very sorry, because we found, to our surprise, that he was really proud of the place and of us, since, in spite of all its drawbacks, our mortality was lower than

that of any of the other Serbian hospitals, and he boasted we were doing by far the greater proportion of the operating work in Uskub. This discovery of what the old man thought of us, as Steve remarked, " cheered us up some "; and we settled down to the problem of tackling our *bête noir*, compound fractures of the thigh, with renewed vigour again. These, and the scores of septic knee-joints we had, would, we knew, provide work for the next two months, even if we did not take in a single new case in the interval. And after that, by March, we felt that, our contract up, we could return to England with the feeling of good work, well and truly done.

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It was about this time that the " Sergeant " got into trouble. The " Sergeant " was one of our orderlies, a very trim soldier who had been through the South African campaign, and in the first Balkan war with the Bulgars. We all liked him very much. He took orders like an automaton, and carried them out, right or wrong, with the most rigid scrupulosity—an order to him was a sacred thing.

He was most gentle with the patients, never sparing himself for their comfort. He kept himself and his uniform spotless, and on all points of military etiquette was a mine of information. When any of us grew slack in the matter of belts or buttons, in the way we held ourselves when out of doors, in the smartness with which we made or answered a salute, we could feel the disapproval of his silence shouting at us in the extra punctiliousness of his manner. But—and it was a very serious but—he had one weakness—wine, or in this case " koniak " or " slevovitza "; and under the influence of alcohol he altered completely from a mild mannered, very correct orderly, to an equally correct but deliberate fire-eater.

He never drank except when off duty; but when the

day's work was done he would betake himself to some café in the town with one or more companions, imbibe slowly and sedately, hour by hour, till he was soaking in it. He never got incapable. He was always quiet and correct in the morning. But when he was in this condition there was no mad escapade of which he was not capable. He was not a good-looking man, but somehow he caught the eye of women. There was something intensely virile about him. All women liked him. The sestras in the hospital used to smile at him when they would take no notice of any of the other orderlies.

He talked very little to the officers. I think Steve and I knew him best.

One evening he came to me, clicked his heels, saluted gravely and said :—

"Sir, have I your leave to fight a duel to-morrow afternoon?"

"A duel?"

"Yes, sir."

"Does it touch your honour, Sergeant?" I said gently, having long ago ceased to be surprised at anything.

"It does, sir."

"Tell me all about it," I said.

"It's like this, sir. I was sitting in the café of the 'Hotel de Balkans' last night, when a lady, a 'sestra' at the hospital, came in and smiled at me. I knew the lady, sir. But this evening she was with an officer, a Lieutenant. The officer took exception to my smiling back at her, and threw a glass of wine at me. I slapped him in the face, sir; and he challenged me."

"I see, Sergeant. But is it permissible for you to fight an officer?" I said, hoping thus to get out of the difficulty.

"It is, sir, in this country, if the officer waives his rank for the occasion. We discussed the matter, sir, and it is in order."

"I see. And what weapons have you chosen?"

"Well, sir. I'm rather out of practice with the sabre, but I'm a fair shot. I've chosen revolvers."

We had already had to send one orderly home through an unfortunate *contretemps* with the military authorities.

"Good Lord," I thought. "It's all fixed up; and we're going to have another beastly complication which, this time, may drive us out of Uskub."

"When is it to be?" I asked.

"Well, sir, I took the liberty of fixing for to-morrow afternoon at three, hoping you would not need me in the hospital."

He was so quiet and deferential about it, so casually matter of fact, he had me at a complete disadvantage. I was not in command, and as he had told me in confidence, he knew I could not divulge his secret.

Before the great war, I shared, I suppose, the intellectual horror of duelling most people in normal times of peace possess. But the Prussian has changed all this. We have become more primitive. Old ideas have recovered value. The war itself was only a duel on a larger scale. Men fought for honour, not as individuals but as nations; and the greater includes the less.

The only trouble in this case, to my mind, was what would happen supposing one or other of the antagonists was killed. How would it affect our work? What view would the military authorities take of it?

I knew we, as a unit, would have to stand by our man at all costs.

I had a feeling that the "Sergeant" was the better man. I could not visualise him as dead or injured somehow, and experience has taught me to rely on my foreknowledge. It is a gift for good or evil of the Celt.

The unit, I thought, would probably have to leave. We should be too unpopular with the army to remain. But there was one consolation if we did go:—the patients would not suffer. Our work now could be

taken on easily by the staff of Serbs, Greeks, American-Czechs, Austrians already on the spot. Fighting along the frontier had practically ceased; no fresh cases were arriving; and there was an adequate supply of doctors to cope with all the work that remained.

The next morning arrived, and I saw the "Sergeant" working away, gently, methodically at his dressings, just as if nothing was going to happen. In the afternoon, as I expected, he disappeared.

"I guess there's some dirty work at the cross-roads by now," said Steve, glancing at his watch about three-thirty.

"Hope the poor old 'Sergeant' is all right," I said, with a momentary qualm.

"You bet your life," said Steve, cheerfully.

But, of course, it was all very foolish of us. There must have been half a hundred witnesses of the encounter. None of us had thought of that. We also had forgotten the lynx-eyed Serbian government. When we got back from the operating theatre we found it was all over; the "Sergeant" had returned to his quarters; there had been no duel.

What had happened was that the Serbian officer had been interrogated that morning, given his orders, and sent off to the Albanian frontier on duty, forthwith. Equally quietly the "Sergeant" had been called before the Major and our Chief, his story taken down and corroborated. He was then given to understand that no blame was attached to him, but that a duel was out of the question, the episode was over, and he was to think no more about it.

So it ended. He never mentioned the matter again. Neither did we. And, in the shadow of the graver things that were to follow, it was soon forgotten.

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It was just after this that we had trouble with the Little Red Woman. Whilst she was away at Monastir

another lady doctor, Madame Markovitch, arrived in Uskub from France, and put her services at the disposal of the Major. We wanted an extra physician badly, especially one who could speak the language, because treating people medically without this knowledge is much more difficult than handling them surgically. Consequently we were very glad to have her; and before the Little Woman came back, she was put in charge of our Number 2 Hospital, where we used to get a lot of Recurrent Fever, Small-pox, and Diphtheria mixed up with our ordinary medical cases. The difficulty was where to house her. The city at the time was very much overcrowded, and there was no place near the hospital except the Little Woman's room. The Major, poor man, greatly daring, put her there; and there the Little Red Woman found her on her return. For a day or so she said nothing, but obviously she was very much distressed.

"And she does snore so," she said to me, piteously.

The Major felt very guilty, but he was quite helpless. He offered to take the Little Woman into his own house; but as he already had Lady Paget and her secretary, it was too much to expect of him; and she knew it, and refused.

Then Madame Markovitch got a violent catarrh, and snored worse than ever. To add to our troubles, just then some English papers arrived with a long and coloured account of our work. Incidentally there was a most laudatory notice of the Little Red Woman in it; and it was to this, for some obscure feminine reason, that she chose to take offence.

At once she jumped to the conclusion that I had written it. I was absolutely innocent, but she refused to believe it. It must be me; and that settled it. After registering a protest, I left it so. But there was a distinct coolness between us for some time. The real trouble was that she was beginning to feel the strain of her months of overwork, and would not admit it.

Eventually we found a room elsewhere for Madame Markovitch, and peace reigned once more.

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By this time surgical work was slackening down everywhere. We had reached the middle of January, and were able to finish every afternoon before tea. After the strenuous time we had been having, this made us feel almost as though we were loafing. There was a spirit of change and unrest in the air. One of our men asked if it were true that the unit was going home. Many of the Paget Unit were arranging to do so. One of their nurses, who had been very ill with Scarlet Fever, had decided to leave for England in a week.

Stretton, too, had never quite picked up again. He was thin, and pinched looking, had developed sciatica, and got a return of an old complaint, bronchial catarrh. When we heard that the nurse was returning, it seemed a good opportunity to send him in her company. There was also the orderly who had contracted small-pox. He was now convalescent, and, as he had turned out rather useless, it occurred to the Chief to send him also home, so that Stretton might have a man to look after him should he fall ill on the way. Arrangements, therefore, were made to send all three home by Brindisi.

It is painful always to say good-bye to comrades who have been with one in times of difficulty. One remembers then all the loyal help they have given one, and forgets the occasional quarrels bound to arise amongst any group of men of independent thought.

Stretton wandered round aimlessly on his last day. He was glad to go, and yet loth to leave us. He made his final purchases, said good-bye to his Serbian friends, gave directions as to what we were to do with his letters, presented me with his camp-chair, bath and wash-stand.

We had a little farewell dinner, with Sister Rowntree, the Little Red Woman and the Consul present. The Chief made a quite felicitous speech, Stretton an

emotional reply. We all felt rather ashamed of ourselves, hating to show any feeling.

Then we separated to write the letters which Stretton was to take with him and post in England.

It was five in the morning when we were called to breakfast. The train was due to leave at six; and at the last moment our party nearly missed it. An urgent message came, and we rushed over to find everyone else there, and the train already delayed ten minutes on our account. Quickly Stretton was bundled in, the guard blew his horn, the engine whistled, and the train moved slowly out of the station.

Then we went back, feeling curiously lonely. It was the first break in the unit.

CHAPTER IX

THE SHADOWS DEEPEN

The Polymesis—An operation in the street—The shadow of Typhus—Sister Rowntree joins us—The Unit is stricken for the first time—"Bolivani" and the trouble with James—The funeral of the Serbian Major—The Tzigane village—Why the women are plain in Macedonia—Storing Mannlichers—Sherlock gets Typhus—Our first death in the Unit—A Serbian afternoon call—The "Sergeant" gets it—Why the Austrian was treated in a hay-loft—I pay a visit to Nish—We meet the Royal Free Hospital Unit—The Ruski Tzar and Anna—The "Pyramid of Skulls"—The Serbian Red Cross—How we discommoded the two Greeks—English nurses—Back to Uskub.

THE Hospital for Contagious Diseases at Uskub was called the "Polymesis," otherwise the "half moon." When we had any case in our hospital we wished to transfer, we sent a notice to the "Chancellery," the Major's office, and after more or less delay a decrepit one-horse ambulance would arrive and carry off the patient. When there was rather a rush, and the ambulance was not available, the man was simply bundled into a fiacre and sent along, the fiacre afterwards returning to ply for hire just as before.

The Polymesis itself was rather a fine building on the outskirts of the city, on the far side of the Vardar, and had been the British Red Cross Hospital during the first Balkan war. When I visited it soon after our arrival it was full of relapsing fever, with a few typhoids and diphtherias. Even then it was staffed largely by Austrian bolnitchers.

The Doctor in charge had much too much to do, and consequently, being a Greek, he did not do it. Evidently he was no surgeon, for when a bad case of

diphtheria requiring tracheotomy came under his care, he used to send it on to us. Once, coming out of the Hospital, the Chief came across such a patient on a stretcher being brought in with acute laryngeal obstruction. The man obviously required instant tracheotomy. Quickly the Chief ordered him to be brought round to the theatre, which was in an adjoining building, meanwhile hastening in front to get the instruments ready. Finding the man did not arrive, he rushed downstairs into the street again, to find that the bolnitchers, rather tired of their burden, had placed the stretcher in the snow on the ground, and were having a rest. A glance showed that there was not a moment to lose. Luckily the theatre orderly was looking out of the window at the time, and the Chief shouted to him to bring the instruments down. Then and there he performed the operation, without anæsthetic, in the street with all the curious passers-by looking on. The man recovered. After that we preferred to keep our bad diphtheria cases, whenever possible, knowing that they were certain to die if we let them go.

The day after Stretton had gone home, Sherlock came to me in great excitement.

"They've got two cases of typhus in the Polymesis," he said.

"Real typhus? What *we* call typhus?" I queried. "Last time you went, you remember, they turned out to be typhoid."

"Yes. Real Typhus—Typhus Exenthematicus," he said. "I hear there's no doubt about it this time."

"Well, you know what I think," I answered. "I know you and the Little Woman will go to see them. I can't stop you. But I do ask you not to handle the cases when you go. They're deadly contagious. You may bring it back to the mess. I don't like it. If we've got to handle it in our work, well, we've got to handle it. I don't mind that. I've done it before, and

I can do it again. But I'm not looking for trouble. I confess I'm frightened to death of it."

I stared hard at him as I spoke, and watched his jaw hardening. Sherlock, I knew by now, was a very obstinate little man, full of courage, full of scientific curiosity. He had never seen typhus, and he would not have missed this opportunity for worlds.

"We're going this afternoon," he said. "I'm as keen as mustard, and so is the Little Woman. I see your point all right, but I'm going all the same."

They came back mightily pleased. The cases were real typhus, and the rest of the unit grew very excited at the news. None of the others had ever seen a case; I was the only one with any practical experience; and their enthusiasm somehow seemed queerly ominous to me. We had a full house debate over the disease throughout tea. They all rushed for their text-books, and soon we were in the midst of a violent controversy, quarrelling furiously over technical points. The English manuals, "Osler," and "Taylor" differed from the Little Woman's German text-books. She declared that when the fever had been at its height for about a fortnight, it gradually fell to normal in approximately a week, and pointed to typical charts in her text-books as evidence. We, on the other hand, maintained that at or about the end of a fortnight there was a "crisis," followed by a rapid fall to normal in twenty-four hours. We showed her typical charts in the English text-books indicating this, but she would have none of it.

As a matter of fact we were each right. For later we frequently came across cases of both varieties. In Ireland now (as in England formerly) most but not all the cases end in a "crisis." In the Continental variety nearly all the cases develop a temperature which gradually subsides. Otherwise, clinically, there is no difference. All the other symptoms are alike. Oddly enough almost all the cases that occurred later among

our own orderlies and doctors recovered by crisis, whereas amongst the Serbs and Austrians, " lysis," that is a gradual fall of temperature, was the more common.

But at the time these early cases occurred we did not know this, and the dispute lasted for days.

Meanwhile things were happening.

In a day or two we heard there were now over twenty cases at the Polymesis. Then we learnt that it had broken out amongst the Austrian prisoners segregated in the old cavalry barracks on the road to Kumanovo.

Next morning Sherlock came to me.

" I want you to look at a suspicious case in No. 3 Hospital if you would," he said.

We went round. The man was lying drowsily. At a word from the bolnitcher he sat upright and threw his blanket rapidly off. I stood at the foot of the bed and looked at him.

" Where does he come from ?" I said.

" He's one of a batch in last night, by train, from up country, I think," said Sherlock.

" Well, my son, he's got it all right; and you'll soon know all about it now. We're going to have an epidemic in this awful place of ours. There must be hundreds of contacts from this case alone," I said.

Sherlock nodded.

" You're a cheerful person, I must say," he remarked.

" What about his spleen ?" I asked suddenly.

" It's enlarged," he answered promptly.

" So. You've been feeling it with your bare hands, have you ? And you've been examining him without anything over your uniform, have you ?" I said reproachfully.

" I'm not afraid of it," he answered stubbornly.

" I remember when I was not afraid of it either," I murmured. " But I am now—frightened to death. Get him away as quickly as you can."

The man was an Austrian. They moved him that afternoon, and we hoped we had been prompt enough.

He was sent, mattress and all, so that no one would be put on his infected bed.

"It's a good thing he was not in the big Surgical Hospital," said Barclay when he heard of it. "It would be awful if the operation cases began to develop it."

"Yes," I said gloomily.

It was at this time that Sister Rowntree asked if she might join our unit permanently.

All the time we had been working we had felt intensely the absence of skilled nursing in the hospital. Her presence with us would, we knew, be an immense boon. But, with the prospect of an epidemic coming on us, I felt it would be most unfair to include her in the risk, unless she fully understood what she was undertaking.

"I've been through this thing before," I said. "The chance of our escaping scot free is just nothing at all. Now that the old man and two orderlies are gone, we are reduced to fifteen. Of this fifteen, possibly more than half are going to get it. Some are going to die—no one knows which, or how many—but some certainly. Now you can keep out of it quite easily. You came for three months. Your time is up. You can go home to England to your work there with an absolutely clear conscience. If you join us, you are doing so at a risk we have no right to ask you to accept. I don't advise you to join us. What do you think?"

I have ceased marvelling at the things the English nurse is capable of doing. It isn't as if it were one woman. They seem all to be alike.

"I'll come," she said quietly.

"Knowing the risk?"

"Certainly."

And that settled it. The Chief found a room for her close to the hospital, and we took her "on the strength" of our Mission (the "1st British Red Cross Serbian Unit") next day.

As I have mentioned, a number of our orderlies had been ill with relapsing fever, but none of them, save Edwards and Gulliver, ever caused us any anxiety. Edwards was our youngest member, Gulliver our oldest.

In the middle of his attack Gulliver nearly died. His heart suddenly began to dilate and flag. We were very anxious about him for some days, and it was then we began to feel how much we would miss him if anything happened—for in his way he was an institution, a source of great joy. He owed his life, I think, to Stretton, who looked after him untiringly, and got him well just before he himself went home. An elderly grey man, in civil life a plumber, or, as he termed it, a sanitary engineer, he was a most efficient orderly, had a smattering of colloquial French and German, and was most complacently conscious of his own importance. The other orderlies called him Doctor Gulliver, half in derision, half in respect, and he accepted the title quite blandly as his right. There was no self-consciousness about Gulliver.

When he recovered we decided not to risk taking him back into hospital, but to keep him on "light duty" as a permanent orderly about the quarters, to act as Sanitary Inspector, Assistant Quartermaster, general handyman and go-between. If he had been made Prime Minister he could not have looked or felt more important, for whatever he did he had the pleasurable delusion that he was the pivot round which the entire mechanism of the unit revolved. Naturally he pleased us very much. As Steve remarked he was "some considerable duck."

The other man was totally different. He was a charming diffident boy, quiet, thoughtful, delicate of body but with one of those Puritan consciences, rigid and intense almost to fanaticism.

When the war broke out he had been deeply stirred by the call of country. He could not be a soldier; the idea

of taking human life was utterly repugnant to him; but he felt he must be serving in some capacity. And so, against the wishes of all his people, he had volunteered for this far-off sector of the war, knowing how great the need must be. Always he was most conscientious, always he worked his body not by its capacity but by the demands his soul made upon it. And every contagious disease that came along he got. Twice he went down with relapsing fever. Afterwards he became ill with a form of scarlet fever endemic in the Balkans. When he recovered from this, as he was not strong enough to stand the drudgery of dressing, we put him on to helping Sherlock on the medical side. It was Sherlock's habit to go slowly round from patient to patient finding out symptoms, and, as he diagnosed, handing them a pill, a tablet or a powder from a nested tray he had made for him. This he did twice daily, because we had no bottles with which to dispense medicines.

It was Edwards' duty to carry the tray round after the doctor. The other orderlies called it the "winkle box," but Edwards was very proud of it, and kept the various drugs scrupulously to their own compartments.

Things went on like this for about a fortnight, then he became ill again. His temperature shot up rapidly; he had intense headaches; and he was once more relegated to bed, much to his disgust, on the very day Stretton and his orderly left for England.

He was sleeping in the dormitory with the other men, the diagnosis being another attack of relapsing fever, which most of the others had already had. Sherlock was looking after him, and in the press of work no one paid much attention to him. Gulliver attended to his needs during the day, took his temperature and reported regularly.

When he had been ill five days, Sherlock came for me to the hospital where I was busy looking after my operation cases with the Serbian sestra.

"I want you to come and see Edwards," he said hurriedly.

"Now?" I queried in surprise.

"If you would. I'm rather worried about him. He's not very well. Sorry to bother you."

We left the hospital together, and crossed over the road, dodging behind a bullock waggon laden with firewood which some Austrian prisoners were unloading in our back garden.

We found the patient lying in the dormitory with Gulliver on duty over him. His bed was the middle one of seven.

Together we examined him carefully. Then we went out into the yard and stared at one another solemnly.

"D'ye think he's got it?" said Sherlock.

"I'm quite sure of it. The abdominal rash is absolutely typical," I answered. "Let's wash our hands."

Mechanically we went into my room and disinfected our hands.

"I'll go and tell the Chief," I said. "You see about the isolation."

Then I went back to the hospital thinking hard. Of course I knew what we were in for. The chances of stopping the further spread were almost nil. We had to try, of course. We did try. But Fate was too strong for us. The man had been lying for five days amongst his fellow orderlies, and they were now all contacts.

It was impossible to diagnose him sooner, for the symptoms are almost identical with relapsing fever until the rash appears, and by that time the mischief is done. Of course, if we had had a microscope with us we could have told at once whether it was relapsing fever or not, but we had no laboratory fittings of any kind.

Whilst there was no bad epidemic we could carry on, but now the real trouble was coming on us, we began to feel our deficiencies acutely.

I found the Chief and told him of our discovery. He turned out at once to see the patient. When he came

back he told me he thought I was wrong. Naturally I was nettled.

"Ever seen typhus before?"

"No."

"Well you've seen it now, and you're going to see some more. Get the Major to look at the boy."

The Major had lived in the city for thirty years. In peace time he was its Medical Officer of Health. The disease was endemic in the country, and he saw a few cases every year. Like all the Serbians he believed the infection was carried in the breath.

We sent for him. He seemed very quiet and depressed that morning; but he came over at once when we asked him, patted the boy kindly on the head, said he was doing splendidly, then came out and told us he was a typical case of a severe type, and advised us to inject him with 10% camphor oil every three hours.

Incidentally he informed us that his colleague, the Major in charge of the "Idahya" (No. 2 Reserve Hospital), had died of typhus that morning. They had been old college chums together in Vienna, and he felt his death most acutely. No wonder we had thought him depressed.

He suggested we should send the patient to the Polymesis, promised to have a single room for him, and assured us he would receive every attention. But the plan did not please us. We did not like the idea of abandoning one of our men to the tender mercies of untrained Austrian orderlies. The gate-house, where we had isolated our small-pox case, was now disinfected and vacant. That, we decided was the place for him. The question was who was to look after him there.

"We've got to put it to the orderlies and ask for a volunteer," said Barclay.

Sherlock and I went to interview them after lunch. We explained to them the risk, and suggested that one of the unmarried men should volunteer. I think there were four unmarried men. They all volunteered, and

we picked Glazier as being the man of the finest physique among them.

The patient was moved that afternoon on a stretcher, and made comfortable in the gate-house. We obtained a bell tent from the Command, and pitched it in the front courtyard for Glazier. He moved his kit into it, and from thenceforth was taboo to all the others. A special Austrian orderly was detailed to bring his and the patient's food. All dishes were separate; communication with the mess was prohibited; and thus we hoped to check the course of the infection amongst ourselves.

At the time it was exceedingly difficult to find out how extensive the epidemic had already become. Censorship was very strict, and the Serbian Government was doing everything possible to conceal the ravages the disease was making in its army. But gradually things leaked out. Already one hundred and twenty-three doctors had been stricken by the disease in North Serbia. Already ninety-seven of these doctors had died. The disease appeared to have started in the Valievo district, and it was spreading steadily south. Nish was said to be full of it, and no precautions whatever were being taken to prevent contacts wandering all over the country. Soldiers on leave, refugee peasants, convalescent patients travelled freely by train spreading the virus as they went.

Next day an Austrian medical student, a very good fellow, who had been helping Sherlock, was stricken in our No. 3 Hospital. So far our surgical hospital had escaped, and we were congratulating ourselves. But on the following day the Little Red Woman discovered one on the third floor amongst my operation cases. We bundled him off at once to the Polymesis; and then we looked at one another. It was getting closer and closer to us. Presently, we knew, it would be all over us; but as long as we were able to carry on we decided to do so.

The suggestion was made to us at this time that we

should transfer our energies to Belgrade, which was officially free, taking all our surgical cases to a new hospital there. The Chief considered the offer carefully, but the number of contacts was too great to permit us to hope to be able to keep the infection away from us, supposing we did go there. The trouble about the disease is that it takes from twelve to fourteen days to show itself after infection, and all this time the patient has absolutely no symptoms. Consequently any one of us might have it without knowing it, and it might declare itself any time after the proposed transfer. Therefore we decided against any move for the time being.

A domestic trouble distracted our minds a little just then. Owing to the fact that fighting on the frontier had practically ceased, convalescent patients were being granted " leave " much more liberally. When a man was ready for discharge, therefore, he used to come along with his " leesta," and on it we would mark 10, 15, 25, 30 days according to the nature of his wound, and the length of time it took him to reach his destination. Owing to the poor railway accommodation, many of these men living away from the line in remote villages had as much as five or six days' walking to do from the nearest railhead. But almost all of those who were able to walk were eager to get home. Many of them had been away over two years; and some had no idea whatever of the whereabouts of their womenkind and children after the Austrian irruption, or of the fate of their little farms since they had been called up on active service.

Naturally this " bolivani " (home leave) was eagerly sought after; and we were constantly being besieged to grant it, irrespective of whether or no the patient was in a fit state to benefit by it. Naturally we had to refuse many, much to their disappointment. Naturally, also, we were very dependent on what the interpreters told us about the patients' circumstances, how long they had

been away from home, how far they were from a military hospital, and so forth.

The oriental mind is accustomed to the bribe. It was only natural, therefore, that these illiterate peasants should think that by offering something to the interpreters their chance of leave would be bettered. And that was what happened. Every man, when given "bolivani," was advanced one dinar (one franc) for each day's leave granted. If he got ten days longer, by a favourable appeal from the interpreter, he got ten dinars more. Most of this found its way into the interpreter's pocket, the men being quite satisfied to get the extra days. It was the Little Red Woman who first discovered what was going on; so we made it a rule at once not to grant leave to anyone brought up specially by a bolnitcher or interpreter. If the man wanted it, he had to come himself and ask for it. This scotched the profit making. But it did not kill it.

One day the Major came up in a towering passion. He had a "bolivani" paper in his hand. The number obviously had been most clumsily altered from 15 to 25 days' leave, and he fell upon James, our Austrian interpreter, in a foaming rage, accusing him of having done it. None of us could believe it. The risk to a prisoner was so great. The crime was forgery of a military document by a prisoner of war, and the punishment was fifty strokes with the whip and two years in chains. We all trusted James implicitly. We could not believe for a moment that for a paltry ten francs he would have risked such a horrible punishment. James protested his innocence vehemently. He was white with fear. He begged us to save him. It was Barclay who had granted the leave; and, when James appealed to him, he said he was not sure, but he thought he probably had altered the figures himself. It was a horrible business. Eventually the Major calmed down. Obviously he did not believe in the innocence of James, but in deference to Barclay he pretended to be satisfied. When we

talked the matter over at lunch, the Little Red Woman said positively:

"I am sure the Major was right. He did the number forge to get the money out of the man."

"But think how good we have been to him, and what a risk it was. Surely an educated man like James wouldn't?" I protested.

"He did it," she insisted stoutly.

"I want to say right now that we've been suffering from too much James lately," said Steve. "We thought he was a white man. What gets my goat is that he's been putting the blinkers on us all the time."

"The trouble about Austrians is that though they're very pleasant, charming people, you cannot rely on them—they always do the easy thing. That's why they're invariably defeated. That's why the Germans are on their necks now like a horrible old man of the sea. I'd hate to be an Austrian," said Sherlock.

"I wish," said Barclay, "I hadn't shielded him. It makes me look such a fool!"

The difficulty now was what to do with him. We felt we could trust him no longer. And yet he was so useful we did not wish to part with him. In spite of what he had done we all liked him. To send him back to Command to help to repair roads seemed too cruel. We need not have troubled, however. James settled the matter himself. Anthony announced at breakfast next morning that he was down with raging fever, and quite delirious.

"I think it is only relapsing," said Sherlock, after he had been to see him.

"Where have you got him? Would you like me to go and make him comfortable?" said Sister Rowntree.

"Not you, Sister. We won't have you where there's fever," said Sherlock firmly. "He's all right. He's in the servants' quarters underneath the kitchens. Anthony will look after him all right."

That afternoon the funeral of the Serbian Major took

place. We were busy with an amputation in the theatre when the sound of the funeral march reached our ears. The Christian cemetery was on the far side of the railway, and to reach it they had to pass our hospital. The operation done, I stepped out and joined the procession.

A half company of men marched in front, followed by the band playing the terrible funeral march. Then came the priests in their vestments, the battered old hearse, and last of all the company of mourners with lighted candles.

How I came to hate that music—the hearse, the slow tramp through the mud past the hospital, over the railway, up the slope to the unkempt graveyard studded with mouldering crosses, the solemn chanting at the grave, the ceremonial eating of the resurrection cake. The memory of it all still fills me with a creepy horror. It was so often repeated in the next three months. Doctor after doctor, friend after friend died, and always there was the same music, the same hearse, the same slow tramp of armed men, the same wait at the graveside in the mud and rain, with the same thought ever at the back of one's mind: that at any time one's own turn might come.

As the body was lowered everyone uncovered, everyone depressed his sword; the priests, gorgeous in green and red, chanted the Kyrie Eleison, and the mourners near dropped earth on the top of the coffin. Then the Senior Officer, Colonel Jorovitch, as was the custom, made a funeral oration above the grave, telling of the dead man's virtues, his labours for Serbia, his quiet courageous death in the service of his country. After that the resurrection cake was brought round, and everyone took a morsel and ate it. It is made of wheat and is emblematic of the rising from the dead, for as the grain of wheat buried in the soil rises as a fresh green shoot to life again, so the body rises on the last day purified from all its earthly ailments.

The next day was a Sunday, a beautiful warm day

under a sky of cloudless blue. Far off, the white-capped mountains shimmering on the Bulgarian frontier called to us. Everywhere the people were out lazily enjoying the sudden warmth. As Steve and I, stimulated by the breath of Spring, casting our troubles behind us, started forth armed with cameras for a long country walk, we were feeling comparatively happy. Edwards, our orderly, appeared better; no fresh cases had occurred that day in the hospital; and none of the rest of our men showed any signs. Coming to the Vardar bridge we made straight for the old town up the hill past the Citadel. Here we came on the Tzigane village, a set of picturesque, tumble-down mud dwellings inhabited by these gypsies. Obviously they are a race apart, although one finds them all over the Balkans. The men dress much like the ordinary peasant, except that they still affect the fez. The women I have already described. They age rapidly, but when young they are very good looking, their beautiful erect figures, aquiline features, healthy brown skin, dark eyes and flashing white teeth set off by their gaudy head-dresses, big gold ear-rings and voluminous green, red or purple trousers over the slim brown ankles, all forming a picture which catches the artistic eye instinctively. Compared with the Macedonian peasant women, in good looks they stand out infinitely superior, for indeed in Serbian Macedonia one thing which struck us forcibly was the exceeding plainness of the women.

When we were discussing the cause of it, Steve said:

"I have a hunch, Father, that in the old days, when a Turk saw any good-looking woman about, she disappeared into his harem in mighty quick time."

"So only the plain ones were left for the Christians to marry," I suggested, as the obvious corollary.

"Yes, sirree; you get me," said Steve.

Half way over the hill, beyond the artillery barracks, there was a well from which the Tzigane women drew

Plate IX.— Serbian soldiers hunting for lice (p. 209).

water; and here they stood round and gossiped, with great earthenware amphorae on head or shoulder, making a most picturesque oriental group. We stopped to photograph, and immediately were surrounded by a host of children pestering us for baksheesh. To avoid their importunities we turned aside into the artillery barracks, where some hundreds of Serbian soldiers were quartered. These barracks were really old stables, but they were dry and weatherproof, and made not at all bad quarters. The stalls were littered with straw on which the men slept. Their rifles and accoutrements hung on the wooden partitions of the stalls. Men lay about in all stages of dress and undress, awake and asleep. A number sat on a bench round the stove, smoking and making coffee. With the open camaraderie of soldiers they made us free of their mess, offering us coffee and smiling at us. As usual, we were taken for Russians, as these men had just been drafted in, and were not yet accustomed to our uniform. We wandered about smiling at them and being patted on the shoulder. They all looked fit and well, bronzed by the sun and as hard as nails. All around outside in the sun, others were sitting sorting their gear, sewing on buttons, patching uniforms, enjoying the Sunday rest from duty.

Further along we came on the Tzigane village again. The women were shy and retiring when we wanted to photograph them; but the men stood up eagerly and seemed quite disappointed when we could not produce a print right away for them. Beyond the village, on the bluffs overhanging the Vardar, we came upon another of the numerous deserted Turkish graveyards covered with headstones at every angle, looking for all the world like split almonds on a cake. Here was the cutting for a new road towards Kumanovo; and here we found a group of Austrian prisoners in their shabby uniforms, flaying a dead horse to be cut up afterwards for rations.

It was getting dark by now and we were rather tired, so we turned back, trudging along the high road ankle-deep in mud—a mud which we now had almost ceased to notice, knowing that a few minutes under the pump when we got home would wash it off our high rubber boots, leaving them bright and shiny as before.

Stimulated by the walk, the fresh air and the change from hospital, we were rather talkative that evening at first; but gradually we began to feel depressed again. The news was bad. Edwards our orderly was worse. The Major had been to see him, and had given a very grave prognosis. In addition, James, our Austrian interpreter, had become a definite typhus. This was a very disturbing fact, as he had been sleeping in an underground room with four beds, occupied by himself, Anthony our mess steward, and the two Austrian kitchen orderlies. All of these were now bad contacts, and all of them, especially Anthony, had been continually in and out of our quarters.

Their underground chamber was a veritable death trap; and the first thing we did was to commandeer two more bell tents, which we erected for Anthony and the men in the back garden, thus leaving James in possession. The Chief was for sending him away at once to the Polymesis, but little Sherlock would have none of it.

"If we do he'll die. I wouldn't send a dog there," he protested vehemently. "James has worked well for us in spite of his forgery. We can't desert him now when he's down, even at an extra risk to ourselves."

The feeling of the mess was with him, and the Chief grudgingly yielded.

"It's a foolishness," he said coldly. "But if you will have it, you will." Of course he was right, and we knew it; but we stuck to our point and kept James.

Our cup of trouble, however, was not yet full. The Little Red Woman came into dinner, and announced that Madame Markovitch, the ancient lady doctor who

had formerly invaded her quarters, was down with something that might or might not be typhus, and consequently our No. 4 Medical Hospital was without a doctor.

Sherlock shrugged his shoulders grimly.

"That means I'll have to do the lot, I suppose," he said. "I've got 300 beds now, another 240 won't make much difference."

"You can't do it," said Barclay decisively. "One of us will have to take it on. You're overworked as it is."

"That means me then," said Steve.

"I suppose it does," I said thoughtfully.

He started next morning with a characteristic whirl of energy. At noon he announced to me that he had discovered two fresh cases of typhus which had developed since the old lady had been taken ill. He was quite enthusiastic about them.

"Come and have a look at them!" he said to me, cordially.

I went, just to make sure he was right. It was a horribly over-crowded place, mainly filled with sick Austrian prisoners. The beds were almost touching. Not a window was open, and in consequence the atmosphere was stifling in its stuffiness.

I sniffed audibly. Steve smiled ruefully at me.

"I get you, Father!" he said. "You're quite right. This is some fugg. But, believe me, I had all the windows open not half an hour ago. They shut them again as soon as your little Willie had turned the corner—God bless 'em!"

Then we had a look at the two patients. Steve carelessly pulled down the blanket of the first case himself to let me look at the abdomen—the place where the rash first appears.

"You mustn't do that yourself," I said. "If this disease is caused by lice, as is supposed, you're sure to pick up some that way."

He stared at me a moment.

"I've been doing it all the morning," he said soberly.

"Well, don't do it again," I returned curtly. "Let the man do it himself."

There was no doubt about any of the cases. "They've all got to go to the Polymesis this afternoon," I said.

"I've got three smallpoxes and two 'dips' (diphtherias). What about them?" he said casually, so casually that I laughed.

"Send them all," I said. "This is a nice exciting place of yours, isn't it?"

"It's a peach of a hospital. There isn't a single contagious disease it hasn't got. Your little Willie will be some dog at diagnosis if he lives through it," he replied.

I had to do a double amputation of the thigh for gangrene that afternoon, and as I was going round to the theatre I saw the ambulance start off with eight of the patients. There were six inside sitting up gazing dully at nothing. A small boy was perched on the box seat driving, on one side of him he had a hæmorrhagic small-pox and on the other a typhus. I thought I was fairly well hardened at the time. I confess, however, that this rather startled me. Later on little things like that simply passed unnoticed, for we were using every vehicle that plied for hire indiscriminately, then.

Next morning when I went to look at my new amputation case, I found the typhus rash beginning on him. He died that night.

The Chief started an elaborate bathing system for us that evening, explaining exactly what he wanted us to do to avoid contagion. I believe he stuck to his regulations himself. No one else was able to keep to them. We were so much in contact with the cases that we should have been disinfecting ourselves all day if we had tried. As Steve put it:

"Your little Willie has no time for fancy frills. It's a mighty tough proposition sorting out the cases, even. It's tougher still to get rid of them. I found fifteen fresh ones to-day, ordered them off, and was told I'd have to have them for keeps, as the Polymesis label is up 'House full. Standing room only.'"

"Good God, you don't mean to say they won't take any more?" said Barclay.

"Believe me, Uncle, that is so. I may be Rube from Rubeville, Bean County, but I have a hunch this is some epidemic, by Heck!"

The pity of it was, that, at that very time, just before we had to stop all surgical work, we were beginning to find all sorts of interesting operation cases. That afternoon Barclay and I did another arterio-venous aneurism at the knee joint. The man was an Austrian prisoner, and, like all these men, submitted quite readily to operation when the condition was explained to him.

It had been raining steadily all the morning, but, as we finished operating that afternoon, it cleared, and when we got into the street we found the road from the station blocked with a convoy of ox-waggons—all piled high with rifles. There was a long range of store-rooms under our theatre, and here they were being packed. There were thirty-five thousand of them, all Mannlichers, and they represented about half the booty captured from the Austrians during their third retreat in December 1914.

Helping to unload them was a company of Austrian prisoners, and the sight of these men busily engaged sorting and piling the weapons captured from their own army was so odd that I rushed off to photograph it.

A Serbian officer, who could speak some English, was handling one of the guns lovingly.

"Ach, it is a beautiful weapon," he said. "We will these all haf repaired and oiled, they will ver' handy be for our new recruits." He made a polite bow to an

imaginary vis-à-vis. "Thank you, Mr Austrian. Thank you ver' mooch," he said, sardonically.

The next day was the 1st of February, 1915, and Sherlock greeted us with the depressing news at lunch that Martin, another of our orderlies, was down with typhus. We had now, including James, three cases in the quarters, and considerable re-arrangements had to be made in consequence. Another orderly had to be taken off hospital work to go on night duty, so that we were thus reduced to three working orderlies in the hospital.

The hospital itself was becoming more and more infected. One day we would be clear, and congratulating ourselves on the fact. The next, two or three fresh cases would crop up, and dash our hopes again. Each fresh infection amongst our own men doubled the work of those that were left; and all the while we had the horrible feeling that any day any of us might start showing symptoms.

Nevertheless we took every precaution we could think of. The dormitory where our last case had slept was cleared and disinfected, the man was put in the gate-house along with Edwards, and the orderlies in attendance were quartered in a tent in the compound and forbidden to mix with the rest. Their things were all kept separate, their utensils disinfected by boiling after use. They had a special Austrian orderly to themselves.

Only it was impossible to isolate the doctors. We were all equally exposed. We all, of course, wore special overalls when at work. Most of us wore rubber gloves in addition. These we left behind in hospital before coming to the mess.

The Little Red Woman, however, was a source of worry to us, for she would take no precautions. In her queer fatalistic Russian way she looked upon our attempts in that direction as foolish and useless—almost cowardly in fact. Our old Serbian Major took no pre-

Plate X.—Austrian prisoners storing captured rifles (p. 213).

cautions; and she wasn't going to either. It might be the English way, but it was not the Russian. She handled her patients as before, just as though there was nothing the matter with them. We were all very angry with her. The Chief said nothing. His was the responsibility if the unit was wiped out, and he was pondering the matter quietly in his slow way before coming to any conclusion. Once he put forth the suggestion, tentatively, that the whole unit should clear out while any of us were left. But the feeling was all against it. He probably did not mean it himself. It gave him, however, the opportunity of sounding our minds, and strengthened him in his present inaction.

The same day he announced his intention of going to Nish to see if he could stir up the authorities there.

"It is obvious the epidemic is spreading," he said. "The authorities here, either wilfully or through ignorance, can give me no information. I hear there are three thousand cases at Veles down the line, and not a single doctor to look after them. There is something wrong with the American hospital at Ghevgeli. When I ask about it, they avoid my questions. At Nish I shall hear what is going on, and what steps are being taken to arrest the disease."

The next evening he went. It promised to be a most unpleasant journey. There were thousands of refugees crowding back north, to discover what the Austrians had left of their homes around Valievo after the retreat. The train swarmed with them—dirty, unkempt, full of small-pox and typhoid germs, relapsing fever and probably typhus. They invaded any and every carriage, or camped out with their goods and chattels in the corridors. The Chief had to sit up all night in a packed carriage in consequence.

Meanwhile we were left to carry on. I found four fresh cases on my floor. Steve, who was still taking charge for the old lady doctor, now definitely diagnosed as relapsing fever, discovered seventeen cases.

Sherlock, who was looking after our men, was up every three hours in the night with Edwards. He had reached the fourteenth day and was still alive. We hoped for a crisis in consequence. Donning my overalls I went down to see him that night. He was sweating profusely, and his temperature had dropped a little. When I came back and reported to the sadly diminished little company, we were all mightily cheered. Later the Consul came in to see us, and we had a most pleasant evening going over the history of Turkey in Europe. He was a mine of erudition, and to liven us up we asked him to give us a definite set of lectures on Balkan politics. He promised at once. Considering that we were, quite rightly, out of bounds to the Paget Unit at the time, and that people were afraid to stop and speak to us in the street, it was most courageous of him to keep visiting us. We never forgot it.

The fifteenth day of Edwards' illness had now arrived. From my bedroom window I could look at the gate-house, and I always knew when the patient was particularly bad, because then the orderly came hurriedly and tapped at Sherlock's window, which was next to mine. The doctor's ear is particularly sensitive to little tapping noises. For years he has been accustomed to sleep always with his sub-conscious mind listening for that little sound in the dead of night that means "Urgent, come at once." Loud noises, hooting, shouting, the banging of doors may not rouse him; but let there come the little gentle knock, and he is instantly awake. Every time the orderly came for Sherlock, therefore, I could hear the window tap.

He had not been disturbed since midnight, and I hoped in consequence that the crisis really had occurred.

Breakfast was now at seven-thirty, and just before seven I heard the hurried tap as I was dressing. Rapidly finishing, I went along to see the patient. Sherlock was already there leaning over him. Martin, the other case, was watching us with burning, fevered

eyes. A glance showed me that the hoped-for improvement had not occurred. He was lying with his mouth open, rattling. His thin cheeks seemed just to cover the bones and no more. He was still unconscious. His eyes, deep sunken in the wasted sockets, gazed blankly upwards, as they had done for the last four days.

A glance at the chart showed that the temperature was now at 105.2°F. I felt the pulse. It was just perceptible. Sherlock and I looked at each other and went out.

"What d'ye think?" he said gloomily.

"Horribly disappointing," I answered.

When we got to the mess, the others, including Sister Rowntree, had already arrived.

"Has the crisis come?" said Barclay.

"No," Sherlock murmured, helping himself to eggs and bacon.

It was a beautiful day, the second after weeks of rain and sleet and mud, and, having no operations arranged for the afternoon, Barclay and I decided to go off into the country for a stroll.

We were just starting when a bolnitcher came rushing from the hospital, panting with excitement and lack of breath. He was a Croat, so we did not waste time trying to understand him. When we got to the hospital, and saw the case, we knew that our stroll was off for the moment. The man was deadly white. The bed was flooded carmine. It was a secondary hæmorrhage from the left popliteal artery. An Austrian orderly was hanging on to the femoral. Luckily he happened to be a trained Army Medical man, for none of our orderlies could now be spared for afternoon duty. It was Barclay's week for emergencies, and I helped him to tie the artery in Hunter's canal as he lay. Then we went out for our interrupted stroll, wandered round in the bazaar for an hour, bought ourselves a tin of sardines as a special treat for tea, and came home.

Steve was orderly officer, and as Sherlock had not

been out of the quarters for days, he persuaded the Little Red Woman to take him off for the afternoon. Eventually they went, and Steve was congratulating himself on a fine stroke of policy until they returned.

"Well, where did you go to?" he said, smiling.

"Oh, we went to the Polymesis, to call on the Austrian doctor who is down with typhus there," the Little Woman answered airily.

Steve stared at her with open mouth. He was completely astounded. "Great Christopher Columbus!" he murmured feebly, and collapsed.

We were all furiously angry. It was such a mad unthinking thing to do. Every one of us, of course, was taking grave risks at the time, but justifiable risks. It was necessary, to carry on our work. This, however, was quite different. We stated as much to them both. I think we even used the word "criminal." There was a distinctly strained atmosphere that evening. They felt ostracised. The Little Woman left early. Sherlock saw her home, as usual, and then glided off to see his patients without returning to the Salon.

The next day, however, we forgave them both. We were too close to death to quarrel amongst ourselves. It didn't seem worth while. Edwards, our orderly, was still alive, but hopes were getting fainter and fainter. We all felt that he could not last, now that we knew he had passed the date of a possible crisis.

Sherlock was very quiet and depressed that day. I thought it was owing to our quarrel, but I was mistaken. He came to me when I was alone in the evening. I had been busy operating all day, and was smoking contentedly, lying tired on my bed.

"I say, old fellow," he began diffidently.

"Yes, Sonny, what is it?"

"I've got a temperature and a rotten head," he murmured gently.

That made me sit up quickly. We stared at one another.

"Turn in," I said, "and I'll have a look at you."

I examined him carefully. There was no rash as yet but he was very drowsy. Almost before I could finish examining him, he was asleep. It was a bad sign. Of course there was a faint hope. He had had relapsing fever. This might be a return, but I doubted it. I looked in on him again and again, during the night. He was still sleeping.

As he was obviously ill I took on his duties, and made a round of our three typhus cases in the quarters. Edwards was just alive, Martin was noisily delirious. James, our Austrian, was one huge mottled mass.

Next day Sherlock was no better. He complained of excruciating headache. Obviously he was very ill. There were now just three English doctors left and three orderlies. Barclay and I had to carry on the surgery of our 600 beds. The Little Red Woman had her own medical department. Steve, who was still doing that of the old lady doctor, now had to take on Sherlock's work in addition.

Up to this time we had managed to keep Sister Rowntree away from the typhus cases. She had joined our unit, as I have mentioned, before the plague reached us, and we had kept her away because we hated to let her run the extra risks.

Now she got out of hand, and insisted on nursing Sherlock.

"It's mean of you to take all the risks yourselves," she protested. "I've nursed fevers before, I shall be all right."

"You haven't nursed typhus," I said.

"I don't care," she answered stubbornly, "I'm going to now."

Of course we yielded. It was such a blessed relief to us to have a skilled, trained woman to rely on. Personally I felt very guilty about it, but nursing is everything in this disease and I wanted the little man to live. I had made up my mind by now that he was almost cer-

tainly a typhus. The Major came and saw him and was not so sure. That cheered us mightily. But we took all the necessary precautions none the less.

He slept most of the morning. In the afternoon I found him awake. He asked what arrangements I had made, and how Edwards was. When I told him Steve had taken on for him, and Edwards was still alive, he sighed contentedly and fell asleep again. He must have been very tired, for he had been very much overworked and had scarcely slept for a fortnight. It was almost a relief to him to get the disease, and to be able to give up with honour. Late at night I saw him again. He was quite wide awake, and clear in his mind.

"I won't keep like this long," he said gently. "I want you to look after my affairs in case I slip it."

Then quite clearly and intelligently he gave me the various addresses he wanted me to write to, told me what financial arrangements to make, explained where he kept certain important papers, and, satisfied that I understood, turned round and went to sleep again.

In the dead of night Steve called me hurriedly. It was Edwards. He was *in extremis*. We tried all the last resources of medicine, knowing they were useless. Martin, the other typhus patient in the gate-house, kept following our movements with his eyes, but all the time he never spoke. How much he understood of what was going on I never learnt, but he seemed to be taking it all in at the time.

Steve and I sat silently by the bedside waiting for the end. It came quite slowly and peacefully.

Neither of us dare look at one another. I found myself giving directions sharply to the orderlies. We had kept him alive 17 days, only to be beaten in the end. It was the first death in our unit, and we were all much affected.

We felt we could not leave the dead body with the living man, and so, watching till Martin was dozing off, we carried it out and placed it in one of the tents to

Plate XI. A consultation in the compound over our first typhus case.

keep it from the rain till morning. Afterwards nobody could use that tent. We kept it therefore as a mortuary.

When we came in to breakfast we found the Chief back from Nish. He told us he had been able to accomplish nothing. The epidemic was spreading all over Serbia, and the Sanitary Department seemed paralysed by the extent of it. Officially there were said to be a thousand fresh cases daily. No mention was made of the daily death roll, but we were told that 126 doctors had now died. The Austrian prisoners seemed to be suffering most. Of 2500 prisoners in Uskub, 1000 were already dead. Of 200 Austrian bolnitchers, sent as orderlies to our hospital a month before, only 56 were now left.

"Personally I do not see how we can carry on," said the Chief. "We cannot get any of these Macedonian Serbs to act as orderlies for us. They do not want to die, and I do not blame them. The War Office in Nish has again offered to give us a surgical hospital in Belgrade, and suggested closing down this hospital. I shall have to think about it very carefully."

My little Serbian sestra was in great trouble when I got to the hospital that morning. Her usual smile had deserted her. She seemed distraught. When I asked what was wrong she told me her little daughter, four years old, had come out in a rash on the previous night. We stared at one another silently.

"Teephoose?" I said.

She shrugged her shoulders dejectedly. "Teephoose," she agreed.

I promised to see the child that afternoon. Steve came with me. The house was in the Turkish quarter. A doorway in a blind wall led into a small entry, with rooms over and on one side like a gate-house. This was the men's quarters and public part of the house. Behind was a little tiled courtyard with a fig tree and a

well. At the back of this was the women's quarters, the harem. White-washed stone steps led to a little balcony opening on to a square reception room, with a beautiful old brass brazier in the middle of a floor covered with cocoanut matting. What struck me particularly, after the dirty hospital and the dirty habits of the patients in it, was the extreme cleanliness of the house. It was almost like a Japanese house in its scrupulous neatness.

The child was brought to us in the reception room; and a glance showed that it was ordinary chickenpox. The relief of the mother was extraordinary when I told her. She seemed to think almost that I had averted the disease by diagnosing something different. At any rate I got the credit for it. The family were brought in and they all thanked me in turn. Then followed the typical Serbian ceremony of an afternoon call. A pot of jam was brought round, with two spoons and two glasses of water. Our duty was each to take a spoonful of jam, eat it, take a sip of water, and then drop the spoon into the glass. It is the Serbian substitute for afternoon tea.

When we got back to hospital, Steve insisted on getting me to look at a number of horrible ulcerated throats which he had diagnosed as neglected diphtheria.

He was intensely enthuiastic about them, making the patients open their mouths wide, and breathe in his face while he flashed a light down their throats. They were obviously very malignant cases, and I warned him not to bend so closely over them. Afterwards, when looking at some doubtful typhus cases, I had again to warn him of the careless way he exposed himself.

"If you don't get 'dip' and typhus too I shall be surprised," I said crossly, not thinking how soon my words were to come true.

The Serbian authorities had decided to bury our orderly with full military honours, so on the Saturday morning I watched the beautiful silver-gilt coffin being

soldered down in the compound. Owing to the deadly nature of the disease, the ecclesiastical authorities had decided not to hold any cathedral service. The whole elaborate ritual therefore was carried out in the compound, in the hearing of Sherlock and the other two typhus patients.

The coffin was set on a stand, and covered with the Union Jack. An Ikon was placed in front, and long candles all round the coffin. Four priests in their gorgeous robes chanted the solemn service of the Greek Church, swinging silver vases filled with burning incense. All our Staff, the Chiefs of the Paget Mission and our Serbian Major, the British Consul, the little Russian lady and the hospital sestras stood round holding lighted tapers. It was like a scene out of a mediæval miracle play. Inside the gates, lined up close to Martin, who lay in bed and watched them, was the military band composed of Austrian prisoners, and a platoon of Serbian soldiers with rifles and side-arms who headed the procession to the grave. All the way—over a mile—to the Christian cemetery the band played the only tune I ever heard them play—the Serbian Marche Funèbre. We tramped miserably behind the music through the mud. When we got to the grave we found it was not more than half dug. It gave us a queer sinking feeling to stand there watching, while the Tzigane grave-diggers dug and dug, throwing up shovelfuls of red earth. It seemed such an unnecessary way of piling on the agony.

It was difficult to work that afternoon. Our men were all very much affected by Edwards' death. They did their dressings in a half-hearted way; and none of us felt like hustling them.

The Chief had decided to evacuate our quarters, turning them into a contagious hospital for our men. Accordingly, Barclay and I moved into rooms near Sister Rowntree, and Steve was located also near to the hospital. He, however, never went there. That

night he developed a throat. I looked at it and saw the typical commencing membrane of a diphtheria.

"You've got it, old son," I said, just remembering not to add "I told you so."

Of course we had no antitoxin. We wired to Nish at once for some, but knowing the difficulties besetting the Serbian Medical Service at that time, we hardly expected ever to see the stuff. As a matter of fact we never did; but by a stroke of luck a parcel arrived that very evening from the Pasteur Institute in Paris for the Paget Unit, and they let us have two doses. We plugged it into him that evening, and next day moved him to a tent in the garden. And there he lay quite happy and content.

"Guess, now I've got this, I'm clear of the typhus stunt," he said.

"Daresay," I answered, though I thought it extremely unlikely.

We were now reduced to two medical officers, besides the Chief and the little lady doctor, for our 1200-bedded hospitals, and we spent Sunday rearranging our duties. The Chief was busy with official work and we could not call upon him for routine duty. He looked after his operation cases only. The Little Woman, Barclay and I therefore shared the hospitals between us. In addition, Barclay looked after our own people, with Sister Rowntree nursing them. As we had already cleared out the officers from the quarters, we thought it best to evacuate our men also. We moved them therefore next day into an adjoining hotel; and immediately afterwards the trouble began.

One of the men started a temperature the first night out, and had to be brought back. Of course it was doubtful what the temperature was due to. It might be relapsing fever which he had had before, or it might be the beginning of typhus. We could not diagnose it microscopically, and so had to treat him as a suspected typhus, till the presence or absence of a rash on the fifth

day settled it for us, one way or the other. He could not, naturally, be nursed with the genuine typhus cases until we knew; and so we had again to rearrange things in the quarters for him.

It was a staggering blow to us, this new case. We were morally certain it was typhus, and the thought of all the other orderlies being contacts was most discomposing.

By now we were pariahs. People began to steer clear of us and our hospital. Our washerwoman, a gentle little creature who had looked after us since our arrival, brought the laundry one day, took her money, and disappeared without waiting for the soiled linen. We asked no questions, knowing the reason. Members of the Paget Unit were instructed, very properly, not to visit us. It hurt us none the less.

Our one and only nurse, Sister Rowntree, remained smiling through it all. She looked after all our people—our three typhus, one diphtheria and the doubtful case.

It was a Sunday afternoon and the sun came out bringing with it the soft warmth and the unrest of Spring. Out of doors everything looked so beautiful and peaceful. Far away the blue snow-capped mountains called us from the north-east. We had come back from the pestilent atmosphere of the hospital to lunch, for we still kept the old mess room in the quarters next the kitchen.

The Sister, Barclay and I sat listlessly after our unappetising food.

Suddenly Barclay said:

"Let's get a carriage and go for a drive out of this until tea-time. Glazier, the orderly, can carry on till then."

We jumped at the idea, and inside a quarter of an hour we were driving through the town, making for the old caravan road leading to Salonika along the Vardar valley.

On the way we passed the Polymesis, now a veritable

pest house, crammed to overflowing with untreated cases. The Greek doctor had died, and it was being run by a Serbian, helped by Austrian prisoners. Inside the wire fence some men, pale, weak and tottering, were wandering about aimlessly in the sunlight, whether patients, convalescents or orderlies we could not tell. All seemed to be mixed equally together. Some of them stared vacantly at us as we passed.

"God, what an awful hole," said Barclay, shivering. "It's even worse than ours."

It is impossible to leave Uskub without going through one or more of those queer neglected-looking graveyards so characteristic of Turkish cities. One lay on each side of the road, the tombstones projecting like jagged teeth all over the undulating grassy hillocks. Beyond, we came to a flat plain, between the mountains, stretching desolate, on either side the river, in one long ribbon southwards to the edge of the horizon. Not a house, not a sign of human life was visible. To understand the awful desolation of Macedonia outside the towns, it is necessary to go there. Life has been so unsafe for centuries that no one cares to dwell very far from the protection of his fellow men, and so the peasantry huddle into little villages hidden in nooks away from the main road, and approached only by devious waggon tracks or bridle paths. Far off we could see a convoy coming slowly towards us, which, on nearer approach, turned out to be some twenty waggon-loads of coarse green hay for the Command at Uskub. From the mountains, rose-pink in the evening glow, a cold wind swept across the plain, making us turn up the collars of our heavy military overcoats round our ears. None of the three of us talked. We all knew each other so well, it was unnecessary. At length we turned and drove back, arriving at the mess hungry and much happier, feeling that the outlook was not so desolate after all. It is odd how many of one's troubles have a quite ordinary physical basis.

"I think we should repeat the medicine each alternate day," said Barclay. "Now I'm going to give Steve another squirt of antitoxin. He asked for his rifle to-day, so he must be better."

Next day another of our men went down. It was the "Sergeant" this time, and I was very distressed, as I liked him, and knew his power of resistance was poor.

I had no orderlies left now for the hospital. Such as were still unaffected were looking after our own men under the direction of Barclay and the Sister.

The Little Woman and I were, therefore, each single-handed. We decided that she should stick to the medical side, and I should take over all the surgical dressings. We had practically stopped operating now. There was no one to work the theatre. We had no anæsthetist. The Sister was gone. The orderly was gone. We had taken John, our Austrian theatre orderly, into the quarters. I think he liked it better than holding the amputation stumps. We had also turned the gaunt Austrian widow, who did the theatre washing, into our laundress, since our own little woman had deserted us. The glory of our theatre was now a thing of the past. Even if we could have operated, it seemed useless. Every day when I was dressing recent cases, I found three or four with the rash on them; and, indeed, with our depleted staff any elaborate operation was out of the question. When a bad secondary hæmorrhage occurred, I just tied the artery on the dressing table in the hospital under cocaine, or plugged the wound after a free incision.

The Little Red Woman and I met only at the end of the long day. She was very depressed, but seemed to think she must be practically immune to the disease, as she had been more exposed even than Sherlock.

After tea one afternoon the Chief came round to my new quarters. He had decided to go to Nish again, to see if by any means he could stir up the Serbian Govern-

ment to take some sort of concerted action to check the epidemic in our area.

"In case anything happens to me I want you to take charge of the affairs of the unit," he said. "There's a certain sum of gold in the Consul's hands, and I'll hand you all the papers. If you decide to clear out, do so. Perhaps it would be the best thing we could do. This epidemic is too vast for individual efforts like ours."

Our patients in the quarters were all much worse that night. The "Sergeant," Newton, and Holt were all delirious. Only James, our Austrian interpreter, was distinctly better. Sherlock was extraordinary hypersensitive to sound. We were talking in the mess room after dinner, quite away from where he lay in the dormitory opposite, but we had to stop because he complained so bitterly of the noise we were making. Afterwards, when I questioned him, he had no recollection of this state. Later we looked upon it as a good sign, for, on my attention being drawn to it, I noticed that it was a common symptom in the second week, especially amongst the cases that ultimately recovered, just as a sudden frequency of nose bleeding in the hospital made me discover that one could often thus diagnose typhus three days before the rash appeared—a very valuable help under the circumstances.

The Chief did not go to Nish after all that night. I had discovered twenty-two fresh cases in my ward that day, and this stirred the officials at last to close the medical side of our hospital, and give orders that no fresh cases should be admitted. When the Serb acts he acts rapidly. In the morning when I got to the hospital they had evacuated eight hundred men before nine o'clock. I was thus left with some two hundred and fifty surgical beds only, mostly compound fractures and other serious cases that could not easily be moved. It made me feel quite idle.

The assistant cook at our mess was an Austrian prisoner. When I came in at lunch I found he had

developed fever. That put us into a most awkward fix over our kitchen staff. We got them all out under canvas in the back garden before tea-time. But what to do with the man was a puzzle. He begged so pitifully not to be sent to the Polymesis, that eventually we allowed him to betake himself to the hayloft at the end of the garden; and there he lay, fed by Anthony our mess man, and visited by Barclay, who climbed up the ladder once a day to ask him how he was. It seemed a callous way of treating a man, but it was better than the hospital, for at any rate he was fed, and he kept warm in the hay. Probably had he gone to the hospital he would have been allowed to die of hunger. As it happened he got quite well, and, curiously enough, was most intensely grateful afterwards.

Three doctors, an Austrian, a Serb, and a Greek, had died of typhus the previous day, so three separate times we heard the solemn dead march as the funeral slowly passed our quarters that afternoon. It had got on our nerves by now.

"I wish to God," said Barclay, "they wouldn't. Lord knows it's bad enough as it is, without these constant dismal reminders."

He and I had found most comfortable quarters in a widow's house near the hospital. It was a low-ceilinged room on the ground floor, with the usual wood stove at one side, and two windows looking out into a yard behind, where all the cats of the neighbourhood seemed to congregate at night. The old lady was very kind to us, but we were a great worry to her. The little low room, when the stove was going for half an hour, used to get unbearably stuffy. Every time we went in we opened the windows, and all the while we were there we kept them open. But every time we came back we found them closed again. The dear old lady could not understand our foolishness. She was for ever guarding us against ourselves. There was a little Ikon of St. George over my bed, before which a light

burned night and day. She kept it lit to guard us from evil, for were we not risking our lives for her country. But the draught from the open window kept blowing it out, and the powers of evil thus again got possession of the room and worked us harm, especially in the night watches when Satan held sway as the Prince of Darkness.

Having been deprived of three-quarters of my patients, I was sitting in the dusk, having a quiet smoke with Barclay, just before dinner, when the Chief knocked and came in.

"I am going to Nish to-night," he said. "I'd like you to come with me if you would. The lady doctor can carry on easily now till you come back. The train starts in a quarter of an hour, so if you want to come you'll have to hustle."

I did hustle. We got to the station at seven o'clock. No signs of any train. At seven-thirty things were just the same. A number of distinguished officials were walking up and down the platform; and we then learned that a large English unit was on its way through to Krushevatz that evening. Apparently this had delayed the train; and we were told that it might be two hours late, and certainly would be very crowded when it did come. That set us thinking. We got a wire through to Veles (Kuprulu), asking them to reserve a compartment for us. Then we tackled the station restaurant menu, as no food would be procurable on the train during the entire twelve hours' journey before us.

Word came through presently that they could let us have a coupé, and we breathed a sigh of relief.

"Travelling as officials has certain advantages," said the Chief, sagely. "I asked for a compartment, so they made an effort and got us a coupé. If I'd asked for a coupé they'd probably have put us off with seats in a compartment."

"I wonder whom they've turned out for us," I said. "Probably some unfortunate civilian. Nobody out of

uniform seems to have a dog's earthly in this benighted country at present."

"Oh, well, it's war time," murmured the Chief comfortably.

Eventually the train came in, and we watched a number of very tired nurses and doctors in Red Cross uniform get out to stretch their stiff limbs, and drink hot coffee during the half-hour wait. Remembering how tired we were ourselves after the journey from Salonika, knowing they had a further long wearisome night before them, and that we should see them at Nish, we did not bother them by conversation. Instead we found our coupé, got our kit into it, and prepared to make ourselves as comfortable as possible for the night.

In the morning we all met at Nish Station. It was the Royal Free Hospital Unit, under Mr James Berry. I introduced our Chief to him, and then went round talking to the members of the unit.

To listen to their enthusiastic talk, their optimism, their plans for getting to work quickly and usefully, made me feel very old and tired. They evidently were under the delusion that there was lots of surgery to do, and lots of fresh wounded coming in daily. I told them of the total cessation of fighting, and the consequent lack of surgical work. I explained that the country was in the grip of a most horrible epidemic, and that every nurse and every possible medical comfort should be diverted at once to combating it. They were very polite to me, but I could see they did not grasp it.

"But we're a surgical unit. We came to do surgery," one of them said, as if that settled it.

"Of course we are prepared to do anything, but essentially we are a surgical unit," another added more pliantly.

What was the matter with them was that they were two months behind the times. Typhus had started a little before they left England, but the censorship had

been so rigid nothing about it had been allowed through. Consequently they had arrived to quite unexpected conditions.

I saw that it would take at least a month for the state of affairs to sink into their minds. Then, I knew Mr Berry could be depended on to help in every possible way.

The Chief had already been in Nish, and knew his way about.

"It is almost impossible to get rooms," he said. "The town has had four times its normal population since it was made the capital, after the evacuation of Belgrade. We'll try the 'Ruski Tzar Hotel' first, and if we cannot get rooms there, we'll go to the Command and let them turn someone out for us."

Nish is a miserable town of low-built houses, with wide, very badly paved streets, and a few large empty squares in which markets are held. We found a fiacre and bumped and rattled to the "Ruski Tzar," a third-rate hotel kept by some Austrian Jews. They told us there were no rooms to be had. The Chief, however, knew the lie of the hotel, and made his way upstairs to the room of a Serb friend of his named Petrovitch, knowing that he would not object to our washing off the dust of the journey in it. There we came across Anna. Anna was the chambermaid—a gargoyle for ugliness, but an extraordinarily helpful person. I hesitate to say how many languages she spoke, but English was not one of them. A little bad German and many gestures, combined with her bright intelligence, however, soon got us all we wanted. Afterwards came breakfast, and then a call on the British Minister, who was camping temporarily with his Staff in the Consulate, and very much hampered for space in consequence. We explained carefully to him all we knew about the epidemic, and asked him to help us to get in touch with the Prime Minister, M. Pasitch, and the Head of the Sanitary Department, if such a thing existed in the country.

It was obvious that there was already considerable perturbation in the official world, for the machinery worked so rapidly that we were promised an interview next morning. One high personage in court circles, it was whispered, had caught the contagion, and people were beginning to get panicky.

Newspaper articles had begun to appear about it, and experts stated that powdered naphthaline dusted in the garments was an almost certain preventative. A little lame Serb, who talked most excellent English, introduced himself during lunch at the "Ruski Tzar," and asked me questions about English ideas of treatment, explaining that he was the Nish correspondent of the *Daily Mail*.

Wandering about in the afternoon sun, Nish grew upon me. It was full of the bustling cosmopolitan crowd of a capital. Officers in resplendent uniform were everywhere, driving in carriages, walking in the streets, sitting in the cafés. The only signs of war were the frequent display of black flags hung from the windows of private houses, denoting a death in the family, and the depressing number of black-robed young widows about.

I searched the shops for an English-Serbian grammar for the Little Red Woman, but the best I could get was a French-Serbian dictionary. In Belgrade "Yes" they told me, but in Nish "No." Only necessary things could be got in Nish, and they were at three times the ordinary prices.

Nish was a Turkish town until 1876; but one mosque and the old Turkish fortress that used to overawe the place are all that now remain to mark the Turkish occupation—these, and one grim monument of heroic fame: the "Pyramid of Skulls."

I drove out to see the Pyramid that afternoon. In its way it is unique as a specimen of savage horror in Europe. Such a thing could be found only in the Balkans. It is a mound made of heads stuck in cement,

the heads of some hundreds of Serbian patriots, lopped off by the vengeful Turk after an abortive rising. Most of the heads are now gone, picked out by wind and rain, or stolen by reverent hands for Christian burial. Over the rest a dome, surmounted by a cross, now stands, and the place is sacred to the souls of those that remain. May they sleep in peace.

The river Nishava, crossed by a suspension bridge, separates the town from the fortress. A moat, which can readily be filled from the river, runs round it. I crossed the bridge and walked through the ancient gate of the fortress without challenge. Inside I found it was an extensive open place with several barracks, ordnance stores and big parade grounds. A number of the "Berry Unit" who had come up in the train with us were sight-seeing. What struck me most was the convict prison, with the men, dressed in a peculiar fawn-coloured costume, walking about in leg-irons, for the last time I had seen men in irons was when I watched a Chinese chain-gang working on the roads outside Batavia in the Dutch East Indies.

Part of our business was to get in touch with the President of the Serbian Red Cross Society; and so we crossed the river and drove along a half-made road to the building set apart for the Society, a little beyond the fortress. Here we made the acquaintance of Doctor Lecco, the head of the Society, and his secretary, a distinguished-looking man in the mediæval costume of a priest of the Orthodox Church. Doctor Lecco himself was a benevolent elderly gentleman with a snow-white patriarchal beard. He reminded me remarkably of the Prime Minister, M. Pasitch, the Grand Old Man of Serbia, who guided the country so nobly in its one-sided struggle with its colossal neighbour, Austria. We found Doctor Lecco extremely sympathetic to our suggestions. He put the entire resources of his Society at our disposal, and seemed to have nothing else in his mind than to help us. We learnt afterwards, however,

that one of his own sons was dangerously ill with typhus at the time, and, all the while he was being so kind to us, he was waiting for the telegram that might announce his death. But nothing of this showed in his conversation with us. Indeed, his main anxiety seemed to be to assure himself that we could get rooms for the night. He telephoned through to the head of the Army Medical Department, and himself drove us back in his carriage to the office of Colonel Karonovitch, head of the Department, to make sure that we should be attended to. With the independence of the Britisher, however, we thought we would try ourselves before going to the Command, and got hold of the omniscient Ivan, kavass at the Embassy, to help us. I think we must have spent a couple of hours running round; but everywhere we were met with the same story "no rooms, filled up for weeks ahead." Meanwhile, however, the Command had been looking after us, confident we should fail; and when we were thoroughly tired out, it was a corresponding relief to find that they had secured a bedroom for us at the "Ruski Tzar" itself. Our kit bags were already there, and so it was simply a matter of handing them over to Anna. We did so with thankful hearts and tired bones. Then we went down to dinner. Seeing a small convenient table unoccupied, we commandeered it at once. It was lucky we did, as the restaurant filled rapidly soon after, and there did not seem to be a single vacant seat all the rest of the evening. Immediately after we had taken the table, two fat Greeks came in, scowled furiously at us and went away. Afterwards we learned that these were the two unfortunate people who had been turned out of their room for us at a moment's notice, though they had been staying in the hotel for months. They had been scrimmaging round for two or three hours in a vain attempt to find other accommodation; and now, when they did return, ruffled and hungry, it must have been most exasperating to find that the very people who had turned them

out had also seized the specially favourite table they had been accustomed to reserve for themselves. The little Serb correspondent of the *Daily Mail*, who told us, was wickedly delighted. It seemed to give him exquisite joy that we had been unconscious all the time how badly we had upset them. Greeks were not popular just then in Serbia. They became even less so later.

The "Ruski Tzar" in England would be considered a low-class hostelry. It was a queer mixture of café, beer hall and inn. To get to one's quarters one had to go into a central courtyard, and climb by a stone staircase to the bedrooms above. The rooms themselves were passably clean, with uneven whitewashed walls, brick floors and a few rugs. The beds were covered with the inevitable thick padded quilts beloved of all Balkan people. The lighting was by candle, and the sanitary accommodation unspeakable.

Nevertheless, it was the best hotel in Serbia outside Belgrade, and all the wit and fashion assembled there for dinner at night. The Austrian proprietor always looked as if he expected to be shot at dawn, but, in the meanwhile, he was doing a roaring business. It must be said in his favour that he kept an excellent chef. The food was extremely good. We enjoyed a first-class dinner; and amused ourselves watching Serb officers in gold and red, with their wives and children, dining alongside N.C.O.'s and even privates in democratic equality. Most of the Diplomatic Corps dined there also, and the accredited representatives of the Paris and London newspapers. In spite of the dingy surroundings it was a very gaily decorated company, for the undress uniform of the Serbian officer, though serviceable, is a very gorgeous, very well-fitting affair compared with our own drab khaki. Here and there we could see an unmistakably English or American face—mostly engineers, and oil managers coming from Russia via Roumania, who had had to break their journey at

Nish to catch the connection in the morning for Salonika.

At nine o'clock the dinner was over, and people began to depart. Amongst these were three English nurses, all looking very tired, very overworked. I had a parcel for one of them, and, this serving as an introduction, they asked us to call on them at their hospital in the morning. When they had gone, we noticed that a considerable number of people kept their seats, and fresh arrivals began to come in. Then we discovered the reason for the large white screen at the upper end of the restaurant. The cinematograph show was about to commence, and those who remained had to pay a dinar (franc) extra for the privilege. The pictures were almost all of German origin, either broad farces or saccharine love scenes. It was odd, when I thought of it afterwards, to watch the Serb audience being amused, thrilled, melted by the pictured joys, sorrows and loves of their most inveterate enemy. Human nature is the same the wide world over, and no one, not even I, felt the incongruity at the time.

Long before the show was over we retired. We were very weary, and there was a lengthy programme before us on the morrow. In bed, however, I found I was too tired even for sleep. So I relit the candle belonging to my field pannier, and picked a book out of my haversack. It was the Religio Medici, one of the few books I carried with me constantly. Reading aloud, softly to myself, the sonorous prose of the Norwich physician, I gradually grew less and less conscious of my surroundings, of my weariness, of myself. Then came sleep with soft grey wings wooing irresistibly, and after that oblivion until a sharp tapping on my door, the smiling face of Anna with my breakfast on a tray, and a hasty glance at my watch made me realise that another day was already past its first innocence.

The hospital where the English nurses worked was close to the railway station. I took a fiacre and rattled

over the uneven cobbles of Nish, past columns of ox-waggons bringing in provender, through streets of low-built houses destitute of paint. There were Serb peasant soldiers everywhere in their rough homespun, with rifles and bandoliers. They wore the curious sandals (tsepellé), with spiral straps of leather wound round the leg over gaudily-embroidered charapa (socks), which were drawn up over the lower end of the narrow wrinkled trousers in the manner characteristic of Northern Serbia. I had seen these tsepellé frequently on our patients from the north, but could not obtain them in Uskub, as this mode is not the fashion in Macedonia. Here, however, one could buy them in every leather shop, and I stopped and procured a pair for my own use on the way to the hospital.

The hospital itself was an imposing municipal building, hastily altered for the accommodation of between one thousand and sixteen hundred patients. It was literally swarming with unkempt, unwashed individuals in ragged uniforms, wandering about apparently without check, although a sentry with fixed bayonet stood without the entrance. Along the corridor the patients lay on mattresses on the floor, in the manner to which we were now so thoroughly accustomed. The place smelt elusively familiar. It was the same unspeakably stuffy atmosphere as our Uskub hospital.

Following in the wake of some bandaged figures, I arrived at the dressing room on the ground floor, and there found the three English nurses. There were four operating tables in the centre of the room, and benches round the sides. The tables, the benches, and the spaces between were all occupied, and more than occupied by a continually shifting mass of wounded, who were looked at, dressed, and passed out as rapidly as possible to make way for the seemingly endless queue of maimed, awaiting stolidly and very patiently their turn. Two Greek doctors and the three English nurses were looking after these dressings. The women seemed very

worn and tired, even at that early hour of the morning. Little wonder—they had been working in the same awful atmosphere for months, each day, every day, with never an open window.

Everyone was busy when I entered, and I stood quietly watching till one of the nurses saw me and smiled wanly. The two doctors were examining a case of septic gunshot wound in the arm—a quite ordinary case, one of thousands—very carefully.

"Why?" I said to the nurse.

"I don't know," she answered. "Probably it's a typhus. There are usually four or five every morning."

"But the Director of the Medical Services assured us, last night, there were no cases of typhus in Nish at present."

"Oh yes! Of course not! But all the same there are six hundred in this hospital at the present moment," she remarked. "We're not supposed to know. I'll show you where they are. You look round casually for yourself. The Government is afraid of a panic if the truth were known, so they're labelled influenza. As it is people are very uneasy already. One doctor has died here. A Russian nurse who was with us has died. They took her away and nursed her with male orderlies. There were no sestras, and we were not told till she was dead. It isn't anybody's fault," she said listlessly.

Altogether it was a most depressing morning. I verified the statement that the place was full of typhus. Two of the nurses, I found, were leaving the next day for England, physically worn out, beaten in spirit. The remaining one said good-bye to me.

"Come and see me, if you are ever here again. Remember I shall be all alone," she said simply.

"Why not go back with the others?" I queried.

"I have nothing to go back for," she answered, dully.

There was nothing more to be said. It was the drab, grey tragedy of the unwanted woman. She was fat and plain, elderly and rather pasty. Personally I did not take to her. She was just a piece of flotsam on the tide of life; but she was an Englishwoman, and the thought of her made me feel wretched all day. I could hear her saying "Remember I shall be all alone." It was horrible. I hated her for making me miserable. I worried the Chief about her that evening.

"We'll have to try and do something to rescue her," I said grumpily.

"Aye. If we don't she's sure to die," he answered slowly. "I saw her last time I was here, and I've been wondering if she'd be any use to us. She's not a trained nurse, you know."

It had been arranged that we were to go on to Belgrade that night, and look at the site of the new hospital it was proposed we should occupy. The idea, however, did not please us. It looked as though the Serbs thought we wanted to run away from Uskub. That made us squirm. We felt, moreover, that with our depleted staff we could not start such a fresh undertaking with any prospect of success. When we learnt, in addition, that they proposed evacuating our two hundred and fifty compound fractures, all already typhus contacts, to Belgrade to the new hospital, we were dumbfounded.

"That puts the lid on it," I said to the Chief. "We'd infect the whole of Belgrade with them, if we went."

"It's too hopeless," he answered dully.

Things brightened, however, after lunch.

We had an interview with the Prime Minister, M. Pasitch, and knew at once we had come in contact with a live man. With his fine eyes looking from his benevolent old face, he listened to our exposition of the case, presented with the help of the British Minister and his first Secretary. Once he had grasped it, things began to move. It was arranged that a commission of

three should be appointed in Uskub, consisting of the P.M.O., our Major and the Chief. They were to have plenary powers. The town was practically to be given over to them, and all arrangements made were to be accepted as orders.

Somehow after the interview the horizon seemed to have lightened all round. We felt that we were no longer butting against the deadly inertia, the passive resistance of the provincial authorities of Southern Serbia. The Government was now behind us; the prospect of an immediate improvement seemed rosy; and we decided, therefore, that the Belgrade scheme should be refused definitely, in order that we might concentrate on our own area.

Both of us, I think, breathed a sigh of relief when we arrived at this decision. An irritable desire to leave Nish took possession of us. We wanted to get home. The idea of journeying three days to Belgrade in horribly infected trains did not commend itself to us.

"Let's get back," said the Chief.

It was a rush to manage it. There was a scramble to get to the hotel, a wrangle with the horrid little Austrian Jew proprietor who overcharged us, a wild clattering in a fiacre over the cobblestones, and a hold-up at the level crossing just before we arrived at the station. I can remember, now, commandeering a passing Serb, loading him with our luggage, paying off the fiacre, hurrying laden with small kit into the station, and just barging into the train before it pulled out. Uniform carries respect with it everywhere in the Balkans. We took possession of a coupé which probably belonged to someone else, and simply entrenched ourselves behind our baggage and a wilfully impenetrable ignorance of every language spoken to us. It was quite unjustifiable, very high-handed and eminently successful.

The train was everywhere overcrowded, and the corridors were half full of people standing for an all

night journey in the dark. There were no lights anywhere.

With the help of the stump of a lighted candle, two tins of sardines and half a loaf of bread, we managed to pass the first two hours. Then the candle failed us, and eventually from sheer weariness we fell asleep.

Plate XII.– The queer little ramshackle restaurant . . . with its rings of bread stuck on sticks (p. 243).

Plate XII.—Tzigane woman (see pages 130, 208).

CHAPTER X

THE BLACK DEATH

Quarrels with the military—The uncoffined dead—Meeting our No. 2 Unit—Sir Thomas Lipton and the newspaper correspondents—The Little Woman and Steve succumb—The Consul and I re-visit the Holy Man—An afternoon with the "Howling Dervishes"—Death of the Sergeant—An unexpected visit in the dead of night—The typhus camp—The derelict Tekkah—The story of the Greek doctor and the Serbian sestra—The horrors of the Prisoners of War Camp—Our "Magaziner."

IT seemed like a second home-coming, this return to Uskub. We felt a warm glow of satisfaction at being back where we knew we were wanted. In the soft spring sunshine the queer little ramshackle restaurant outside the station, with its rings of bread stuck on sticks, its sweetmeats, its boxes of matches, its two or three blanketed Albanian customers, seemed oddly familiar.

Everything in our quarters was very quiet. The Sister moved softly round. Our men seemed all a little better. We brightened up.

I turned into the fever-stricken hospital. The wonderful little Russian woman was plodding away. She seemed surprised to see me back. I rather think she imagined I had deserted her. I brought some Serbian books she had asked for from Nish, and told her what powers we had returned with. We talked quietly, working all the time, while the cases were being brought up on stretchers to be dressed on the dirty wooden tables. The orderlies in their ragged grey Austrian uniforms clumped steadily backwards and forwards with each patient, mottled with the sign manual of

typhus, or yellow and wasted with relapsing fever superadded to their wounds. Lice crawled slowly over their dressings as we cut them off, and threw them into the zinc basins at the foot of the tables. Some of them cried weakly like children when we hurt them—we couldn't help hurting them there was so much to do; but most of them bore it with the uncanny animal silence of the peasant. Only the eyes spoke: brown, inscrutable Slavonic eyes that softened and melted for the little red-headed "*Gospodjica doktore*," who had stuck to them so valiantly through it all, and whom they trusted so implicitly. I felt glad we had decided not to have them carted off to Belgrade. It would have finished most of them.

"But no! It is not possible they should have suggested it," she said, horrified.

"They did, all the same," I answered.

"God of my fathers!" she breathed.

* * * * * * * *

There was much prolonged and heated argument that afternoon between the Chief and the military authorities. Everything suggested was impossible, nothing asked for could be done. They wrangled over it all evening. We wanted the new Cadet School outside the city as a typhus hospital. The authorities said it was occupied by troops, and the O.C. troops refused to move. We insisted, and were again refused. Finally we asked to be allowed to wire our proposal and their refusal to the Prime Minister. That was exactly what they did not want. We noted their hesitation, and insisted. Then the opposition collapsed. We had won —on paper. The O.C. troops received an order to vacate forthwith.

Next day nothing happened. The troops were still in the prospective hospital to which I had been posted as Commandant. I was still in the old hospital trying to handle the wounded, and had found thirty-five fresh

cases of typhus in it that morning. The "Sergeant" and one other orderly were now also definitely typhus.

We were by this time a very tiny company. Over half the unit was stricken, and the rest occupied in looking after them. People more and more avoided us in the street. Our landlady said nothing, but edged away from us. We felt like lepers.

The one bright spot was that Sherlock and Steve both seemed to be holding their own, and the Sister expressed herself as satisfied with them.

That afternoon, the Sister, Barclay and I went for another drive along the Salonika Road, as had now become an almost daily custom. We practically never spoke the whole time we were out; but the fresh air invariably made us feel better. Spring had come; and the sunshine everywhere, and the quietude of the desolate, flat country we drove through always seemed to soothe us.

After we came in, I went round to the patisserie to get some cakes for tea. Two ox-waggons lumbering along the main street, each with an armed man in front, caught my eye; and as they passed I glanced casually at the contents.

There were some twenty bodies, ten in each waggon, coffinless, carelessly wrapped in blankets. The legs of one of the bodies, hastily thrown in, dangled over the tail of the second waggon. It made me feel shivery.

Men were now dying in such numbers, the carpenters could not cope with the demand for coffins. People were getting more and more frightened. Even the Tziganes began to refuse to handle the bodies.

When I returned, I heard that another Serb doctor had died of typhus that morning, and that the No. 2 British Red Cross Serbian Unit, complete with nurses, was on its way through to Nish by the night mail. The thought of the equipment they would bring with them filled me with envy. We, the poor old "No. 1" Unit,

had been shot out on twenty-four hours' notice, with one-eighth of the equipment of a Field Ambulance. They were coming with the full stores of a Stationary Hospital. A wild thought came to me that perhaps, if we represented our desperate plight, they might let us have a dozen nurses and one or two truck-loads of stores to help us in our new typhus hospital.

A few capable, trained women, a few bare necessaries from their ample stores, and we should have been so happy. It didn't seem much to ask; and yet it seemed too good even to be hoped for. I think we were all very down that evening. We met the train. Every official of any importance seemed to be on the platform. The unit, we were told, had come out in " Sir Lipton's " yacht—" The Erin "; and " Sir Lipton " was coming up the line with them, accompanied by a swarm of newspaper correspondents. They had an hour to wait at Uskub, before the train started again for Nish; everyone bundled out to stretch their cramped limbs; and soon we were all talking together. I saw a number of nurses clustering round Miss Rowntree. The war correspondents fell upon me with the sure instinct of the news-gatherer. I fancy I must have talked a lot that evening. I felt myself getting rather out of hand at times. Often, when they would interrupt with what appeared a foolish question, I found myself becoming annoyed, forgetting they had just arrived, and that what was obvious to me after three months' work in the country, was not self-evident to them.

The medical officers were equally irritating. They had left England when fierce fighting was still going on, when the wounded were pouring south in thousands and the need for surgeons was urgent. They had come out equipped for surgery. I found myself explaining, as I had to the " Berry " unit a few days before, that there was no more surgery, that the fighting was over, that the country was in the grip of the black death, and that if they wanted to do any real work for the Serbs they

would have to chuck away their instruments and buckle down to tackling the question of typhus, and typhus only.

Looking back on it now, I can see how very disconcerting all this must have been to their previously-conceived plans, and, incidentally, what an annoying person I must have seemed, standing in the half light, dressed in a ragged out-at-the-elbows uniform, talking somewhat hysterically about the needs of Uskub—a place they'd never heard of before—foolishly asking for half their staff and equipment to be handed over—to them an obvious absurdity.

Afterwards I read an account in the *Times*, paraphrasing what I had told the correspondents. It made very good copy.

Everyone, of course, was very nice to us. Sir Thomas promised me a box of tea, which I never expected to get and never did, although I found out afterwards he hadn't forgotten and really had sent it. Captain Bennett, the Chief of the No. 2 Unit, promised to come and see us as soon as he was fixed. Some of the nurses told me they'd volunteer at once if they were given permission; and I'm sure they meant it.

We watched their train steam slowly out of the station, in silence.

Barclay shook his head after it.

"What a waste," he murmured.

We all nodded, and the four of us—Barclay, the Little Red Woman, the Sister and I—turned, silent, into the quiet street.

"I think," said the Little Woman, "I'll look into the hospital."

"I'll come with you," I said.

We went round silently. Afterwards I left her at the entrance to her quarters.

The sentry outside came to attention with a click.

"*Laka noitch, vojniche*" (good-night, sentry), said the Little Red Woman.

"*Laka noitch, Gospodjice Doktore,*" said the sentry, gravely.

"*Laka noitch,*" said I.

It was obvious by this time that the country was in the throes of an epidemic such as it had never previously experienced. The Government was thoroughly alarmed. Even the heavily censored press talked openly about the calamity, and published elaborate directions on how to safeguard oneself against the disease.

It was said there were 125,000 cases already reported in the country, and it was spreadily rapidly. Soldiers on leave, sheepskin-clothed peasants, refugees—men and women and children—returning to their ravaged homes, travelled up and down the railway without let or hindrance, communicating the disease to one another, and carrying it into remote villages away from the main lines of communication. All the so-called hotels, the rest houses, the cafés, the railway carriages, the public vehicles were infected.

We had asked questions about the American Hospital at Ghevgeli on several occasions, and always met with evasive answers. Now we knew why. All the doctors were down with typhus, and most of the nurses. Donnolly, the head doctor, was dead. Veles, the next big town between us and Salonika, had thousands of cases alone, and no hospital and no doctor for them.

All the while we were wrangling to get a new clean building where we could start fair, and treat the disease properly, the Little Red Woman and I were still carrying on in our old Pest House.

Troubles seemed to take a fiendish pleasure in piling themselves one on the top of another upon us. One of our orderlies, Holt, who appeared to be weathering the disease, suddenly grew worse in the night. Barclay and I went over him carefully, only to find he had

developed pneumonia in the base of one lung on the day before his crisis was expected.

I think it was when we were discussing his case that a hurried message came that the Little Woman was ill, and would I go and see her.

Barclay and I stared at one another.

"I suppose it's 'IT,'" he said.

"Considering how utterly careless she is, it can hardly be anything else," I answered gloomily, feeling absolutely sure that no element of misfortune was to be spared us. But when I saw her curled up in bed like a small child, with two big red plaits of hair on the counterpane, I hadn't the heart to say so. Instead I assured her that it was as likely to be Relapsing Fever as Typhus, and no one could really say on clinical grounds which it was for two or three more days.

I found, however, she was not particularly interested in that.

She knew quite as well as I the chances both ways. What she was really anxious about was some three or four special pet patients she was spoiling in the hospital, whom she wanted me to take particular care of whilst she was ill.

I promised, and accordingly took over her part of the hospital forthwith. There were now about 400 cases in the two huge wards on the first and second floors. The top floor had been evacuated, except for a few surgical cases that could not be moved; and we were mainly filled with typhus gathered in from several other hospitals. A large proportion of our surgical cases had gone, or had died of typhus. Quite a number of mild typhus cases were walking around in the medical wards because there was no one to supervise. Our Austrian orderlies were falling ill daily, and no more were to be had.

I spent a long day trying to produce some sort of order with the material I had, and returned to our quarters feeling very tired and depressed.

Our old quarters were now practically a hospital for typhus amongst our staff.

Everything seemed very quiet when I went in. The Sister and Barclay had gone for a walk. It was a beautiful sunny afternoon.

I found Steve in his tent in the Compound, busy with a rook rifle, trying to hit a tabloid stuck in a notch in the tree opposite.

"Diphtheria seems to be quite cured," I said.

"I'm feeling fine and dandy. It'd take more than 'Dip' to get me down and out," he said brightly.

"The Little Woman's got typhus," I said lugubriously.

That damped him.

"Holy smoke!" he exclaimed. "It gives me the willies to think of that girl over there. What's the matter with having her here?"

"She won't come," I said. "She's refused already."

"Hell! You've got to make her," he answered.

I did get her over the next day, after a considerable struggle. She was now definitely typhus, and I put my special Serbian sestra and our own Miss Rowntree on to her. Then I went along to tell Steve.

But Steve was no longer interested. His temperature had jumped to 104, and there was no doubt he had "got it," as he expressed it, "good and plenty."

The Chief had gone away to Nish again to interview the authorities; and so, of our original unit, only Barclay and myself were left.

It was market day, I remember, and I had now got a Serbian woman doctor, who had recovered from typhus, helping to take over our poor old plague-stricken hospital. After the morning round I wandered into the market, just outside the hospital, wondering how long it was going to last, how long it would be before we all fell victims, whether it was worth while

Barclay. Steve.

Plate XIII.—Steve convalescing from diphtheria (p. 250)

struggling any more. There are times when everyone turns coward, I suppose.

The market was full of the usual crowd of peasants from the surrounding mountains selling produce, corn, potatoes, vegetables, chickens, the rough native woollen cloth, embroideries. In addition, there were the usual veiled Turkish women with piles of spangled muslin shawls, hawkers with sweetmeats, sherbet, boza, potters with great earthen jars, Jews peddling brass, china, and oddments of every description, Albanian peasants, Vlach drovers, Tzigane women in huge baggy trousers, Serbian officers in full uniform with their wives out marketing, quite unaware of any incongruity.

It all seemed so far away mentally from the hospital life, although it was so close physically.

I saw the Consul giving advice over Turkish rugs to a bevy of nurses from the Paget Unit, and had a queer feeling that I was dreaming: there wasn't really any typhus, it was just a bad nightmare from which I should presently wake to find that I had wandered out, as I used to months ago, for half an hour before an operation.

Then I returned to the hospital, and had every available window opened to get rid of the awful close smell of unwashed disease which permeated the place. I used to do this every morning and every afternoon, but invariably when I came into the hospital I found them closed again, for the Serb had such an unholy fear of fresh air that the only way one could keep a window open was to break the glass in it.

The succeeding days were a nightmare. The Serbian lady doctor had taken over most of the hospital from me, and I was just carrying on until our new place was ready; Sherlock and Steve and the Little Woman were all seriously ill; three of our orderlies were dangerously ill, and one I saw was dying. The weather, too, was atrocious. It rained steadily all day.

Barclay and I used to wander miserably into the

Consul's smoking room at night, after seeing the Sister to her quarters. Thinking of it now, I realise that it must have required considerable courage on a layman's part to admit such obvious contacts to his house. But he never said anything; he always gave us the feeling that we were welcome; and it was such a blessed relief we used the privilege to the full.

Then the weather suddenly improved, and we plunged into brilliant spring sunshine again. On the first evening after, as I was sitting quietly in the Consul's smoke room, he said:

"I hear there's typhus in the Turkish quarter. What about calling on our friend 'the Holy Man,' and seeing how he treats it? He's your rival 'ju-ju' man, and perhaps can give you a wrinkle."

"Done. Let's go to-morrow afternoon. I'll fix up with Dr. Stadovich at the hospital."

It was over a month since I had been across the Vardar, and it was like a stolen holiday to me. We found our friend, stately and polite as ever, in his little "Tekkah" next the tomb of the local saint, Alim Baba.

There was much fever he admitted, and the saint was being kept busy. Whilst we sat gravely, cross-legged, sipping coffee on his divan, the applicants for healing kept coming and going.

An anxious mother brought her baby with ophthalmia. This he treated by breathing on its face three times, and rubbing saliva on its eyelids, muttering prayers the while. Another woman came seeking a cure for a friend's fever. For her he knotted a string seven times (the mystical number), chanting as he knotted. Others yet again were given pills to chew, made of verses from the Koran written on paper. The usual fee seemed to be half a piastre, which was left unobtrusively by the patient on the edge of the divan.

It was all very dignified and impressive.

It was also infinitely simple. If the prescription did not succeed, it was due to want of faith on the supplicant's part, or insufficient endeavour to call the attention of the saint to the ailment. Our friend, the Baba, accepted no responsibility for want of trust in others. How I wished I could handle my typhus epidemic with the same broad comforting faith, and with no forebodings about the result.

We sat and watched and waited, while the Baba disposed of his clientele, until the numbers dwindled and finally ceased. Then he seated himself gravely on the divan, and we fell into desultory talk whilst he rolled a cigarette, and his acolyte prepared more coffee. I gathered he realised in a vague sort of way that we were in the midst of a great world war, but on the merits and demerits, the good and bad fortunes, and the unexpected changes produced he was quite detached and uninterested. The river of his thoughts rippled uninterrupted by cross currents. Possibly the number of devotees at the tomb of the saint was less and the offerings poorer, but it mattered not.

His disciple saw reverently to the simple wants of his body, allowing him to concentrate on the transcendental mysteries of the higher plane on which his soul moved. Incidentally he cured the sick, but that was a material thing, part of the handicap pertaining to the body, the necessity for which made him feel faintly aggrieved, encroaching as it did on the hours meant for prayer and meditation.

Quite gently and politely he made me feel that my outlook on life was grossly material, that I worked on a plane infinitely lower than his, that what I did was purely on the exterior, whereas what really mattered were the things of the soul.

When we got into the outer world again, I said to the Consul:

"Extraordinary soothing effect, hasn't he?"

"You feel it, too?" he queried. "I hadn't grasped

you were so sensitive to atmosphere; but I use him myself, quite shamelessly at times, as a sedative."

I looked at him sideways, gratefully.

"I see. And you thought I wanted something of the sort? Thank you so much."

Perhaps it was with the idea of giving me a course of distraction that the next evening he suggested we might attend a service of the Rufaï, or so-called "howling Dervishes." At any rate, after my morning round, we took a fiacre and rattled over the cobbles looking for the Rufaï Tekkah, where the ceremony usually took place. Arrived at our destination, however, we found that the Tekkah had been turned into a barracks for one of the numerous new battalions, formed from the Macedonian peasants who were now being enrolled, considerably against their will, in the Serbian Army. This was most disappointing; but as the result of much enquiry and more gesticulation we eventually discovered that a combined service of the Rufaï and Mevlevi, or "dancing Dervishes," was to take place in the Mevlevi Tekkah, which as yet was undisturbed. So we started off once again, rattling along in the brilliant sun, down winding lanes bounded by monotonous mud walls on either side, with here and there open doorways, in and out of which veiled women disappeared mysteriously, giving glimpses of tiled courtyards with an occasional fountain or fig-tree, or quaint balcony or group of laughing children within.

At the Mevlevi Tekkah we found the service was to commence in an hour, so we passed the time lazily in the graveyard of the adjoining mosque, where the plum trees were now in full bloom, amongst the battered, neglected tablets of the dead.

Every Dervish monastery, like every mosque, is placed alongside the tomb of some Weli or Holy man. This particular monastery was very rich in saints. There were some half-dozen oblong tombs inside a long low building, one side of which, next the courtyard,

Plate XIV. "We passed the time lazily in the graveyard of the adjoining mosque" (p. 254).

Plate XIV. A Serbian farmhouse, near Skoplje (central smoke hole in the living room, cattle in the next).

was open except for a grille of vertical wooden bars. Between the bars one could see the tombs covered with rich silk-embroidered hangings, supported at their heads by gigantic turbans. Quaint brass candlesticks and terracotta amphorae stood, in front of each sarcophagus, on the polished wooden floor. Everything showed signs of care and veneration.

Certain predatory instincts in me suggested that these costly silken embroidered palls must be almost priceless, and I wondered why the Serbs had left them.

Later knowledge explained the phenomenon, which is particularly noticeable in Palestine where three great religions meet on common ground. There one finds that Christians, Moslems and Jews alike treat all holy places with veneration. Jerusalem is as sacred to the Moslem as to the Christian or the Jew. The Christ is a prophet to the Moslem. Abraham and Moses, David and Solomon he shares equally with the Jew. It is no uncommon sight, therefore, to see a native Christian praying at the tomb of a Moslem saint, and the Moslem paying equal respect to the Christian. This possibly explains the comparative immunity of these Moslem tombs in Serbia.

In the courtyard itself were a number of gravestones of the faithful buried in the vicinity made holy by these sainted men, and through these a path of roughly-squared stones led to the Loggia of the Tekkah.

Here a silent lay brother relieved us of our boots, and led us stockingfooted along a narrow passage to the auditorium, a low-roofed room with a divan all round it, on which some ten or twelve brothers of the order were seated. Everyone rose gravely as we entered, and we were escorted to the place of honour—the centre of the divan opposite the door. Then everyone seated himself again, cross-legged as before. Opposite each of us was a small ash tray, and now the lay brother brought in a tiny charcoal brazier to light our cigarettes by.

As the ceremony was to be of a mixed nature, there were members of two or three orders present. Some had brown mantles with brown fezzes and black turbans; others had black mantles, a few had white turbans, and some wore ordinary "effendi" costume—that is, European clothes with a fez. Cigarette smoke and a grave quiet flow of conversation rippled round the room. As each fresh visitor arrived everyone stood up, struck his breast three times with his right hand, and seated himself gravely again. Coffee came round. Nothing seemed to be going to happen. And then, quite unexpectedly, a very modern American clock on the wall struck eight, that is four hours before sunset—the end of the Moslem day. I looked at my watch. It was 1.30 European time. This, it seemed, was the signal for which we had been waiting.

Everyone stood up, and we were conducted into the room next door, where the Consul and I were given chairs. This it seemed, was the place where the service was to be held.

It was a plain square whitewashed room devoid of furniture, with three small latticed windows high up in the outer wall. There was the usual Mecca niche (Kibleh), painted blue and gold, with texts from the Koran over and around. On one side of the room, arranged along the floor against the wall, were eight sheepskins, four on either side of the Kibleh; whilst in the centre of the bare scrubbed wooden floor was a semicircle of some twenty sheepskins facing the Kibleh.

Eight grave and reverent seniors took the sheepskins on either side of the Kibleh. The humbler brethren took those in the semicircle. Each devotee, cross-legged on his sheepskin, touched the ground in front of him with his forehead, before sinking back on his heels again.

Everything was very quiet and sedate.

The proceedings started simply with the Fatiah—the

Mussulman confession of faith. As the congregation chanted they swayed slowly from right to left on their knees, intoning the melodious Arabic words as an incantation, led by one of the more prominent members seated next the Kibleh. Line after line, verse after verse followed, the men swaying slowly from right to left chanting in unison, some of them with their eyes shut. One boy near the centre of the semicircle was particularly prominent. He was already hypnotic. His eyes were glazed. His voice rose shrilly in the responses. His body swayed independent of his will.

Presently the whole semicircle rose from their knees and stood, right toe over left. The sheepskins were removed, and the chanting recommenced to the accompaniment of a small tom-tom beaten by a very old, feeble Dervish. Still in a semicircle, the devotees swung forwards and sideways, invoking the ninety-nine names of Allah until they were all in a complete state of mesmeric exaltation.

Suddenly four out of the semicircle advanced in a square, extended their arms and began to turn, head over left shoulder, gyrating at first slowly, gradually turning more and more quickly whilst all the others chanted around them. Minute after minute passed, and still they gyrated, getting faster and faster, till the sleeves of their robes stood out like wings and each body appeared like a poised bird. Then one of the four tapped with his right foot, and all stopped instantly, apparently without any signs of giddiness, though they had been whirling for approximately ten minutes. The members of the orders fell on their knees again. There was still more chanting. Then the ceremony finished quite abruptly and quietly. The "Ecstasis" was over.

We all trooped into the reception room once more. There was some desultory talk of Persian texts over the coffee, and our hosts seemed to have forgotten utterly

their frenzy of less than half an hour before. They were able evidently to disassociate completely between the two states of mind.

"And that," said I, breaking the silence on the way back, "is the 'dancing Dervish.'"

"That," said the Consul, "is the 'dancing Dervish.' It rather reminds one of the methods of the American negro at a camp meeting," he added. "They work themselves up by hymn-singing and prayer, the Dervishes by chanting the name of God until they're mesmerised."

I saw the Consul was getting into his stride, so I interrupted:

"Quite so. By the way, are you coming to tea with me, or I with you?"

That side-tracked him. The Consul was intensely hospitable. We were close to the Greek patisserie in the main street on our way home.

"You are coming to me," he said, diving across the road into the shop to secure a supply of the delectable cakes we all loved so.

Looking back now, there was something pathetic in the way we pretended to be cheerful. Every one was "bright" as an example to the others. The Consul was bright because he represented King and Country, because he was genuinely sorry for us, because he was courageous enough to ignore the fact that we were dangerously risky people to take into his house.

The Sister was bright because she was the only woman we had, and we depended on her so.

Barclay and I only pretended to be bright outside our quarters. In our funny little room, with its low roof and stuffy furniture and awful wood stove, its chromolithograph of King Peter, and its little niche with St. George and his night-light that would blow out when we opened the window, we refused to be bright except when the Sister paid us a visit after dinner.

Then we pretended again. It was all very wearing.

All our people seemed worse the next day. The "Sergeant" developed a right hemiplegia and was obviously dying. Steve was very light-headed and troublesome, and had managed to hide his automatic pistol where the Sister could not find it. We had moved the Little Woman over from her quarters to my old room just before a furious downpour of rain; and she was so ill after it, we decided, much against our will, that we must really beg a nurse for night duty from the other British unit.

Of course they sent us a nurse at once, and we felt most absurdly grateful. We were now feeling such pariahs that an ordinary kindness was almost too much for us.

Then things seemed to brighten. A man I had sent up the mountain returned with a sack of ice for our patients. That night the Consul came in to see us.

"I'm off to Salonika," he said. "If there's any mail you want to send, I'll take it with me."

It was a kindly thought, but no one had the energy to attempt writing home. Instead we fell into desultory talk. The Consul was full of enthusiasm about Mount Athos, that curious colony of Greek, Russian, Serbian and Bulgarian monasteries which had persisted through centuries, in spite of Turkish suzerainty, practically autonomous, not two days' journey from Salonika—another example of the tolerance of Islam.

We planned a tour there. We talked idly of a voyage in a felucca from Salonika through the Ægean isles. We agreed to travel through Spain on the way home to England, visiting what was left of the grandeur of the Moor. And all the while I felt that it was quite futile, that Serbia had laid its infected hand on us, that none of us would ever see the white cliffs of England again. It was a sort of sorry make-believe of things, impossible but well-intentioned.

And in the night the "Sergeant" died. We moved the body to the gate-house, now tacitly looked upon as our mortuary.

Then I went through his effects, turning over his carefully-folded tunics and pitiful little personal belongings, all done up with the neatness of the old soldier. Apparently he was a solitary person. There were none of the usual photographs of women, letters, trinkets. No one seemed to own him. There was evidently no one to write to, who would be sorry. He had given his life quite casually for a people he knew not, for a cause he probably did not understand, merely for an idea of duty, dimly yet tenaciously held. He was just a kindly, unassuming British Tommy, accepting orders, carrying out instructions, and incidentally dying in their execution, like many thousands who have made the ultimate sacrifice since, without any clearly formulated thought except of "carrying on" until death or his senior officer ordered otherwise.

They gave him an officer's funeral. The Czech Band played the funeral march through the streets to the cemetery. The Bishop, clad in purple, red and gold, supported by his priests in vivid green, swinging silver censers, followed the band. The mourners, with candles burning, surrounded the hearse. The solemn funeral service of the Greek Church was chanted over the open grave. Each of us saluted the lowered coffin of our comrade.

Then we went back to the hospital, wondering whose turn it would be next.

I think this was the day when the spirits of the unit sank to their lowest ebb. There was an indescribable feeling in our minds that we were all trapped, that effort was useless, that nothing we could do would help either our patients or ourselves. Overwork, lack of medical supplies, the apparent hopelessness of ever getting anything done by the officials, our sense of

isolation from people of our own tongue, all helped to strengthen the impression.

A queer thing happened that evening. The quarters were very quiet. It was near midnight. Sherlock was asleep in his bed. The Little Red Woman lay tossing in my old room, half delirious. The night nurse had gone to the kitchen to prepare some invalid food. All the doors were open. The fires in the stoves burned a dull red. In each room was a single lighted candle.

A stealthy figure crept along the passage, turned into my room, started, surprised at the sight of the Little Red Woman there, hesitated, and then made for Steve's room beyond.

The door was partly closed, and, as he pushed it gently, it creaked. Still stealthily he pushed it open and entered. Steve, lying on his bed, wakened at the noise, turned, and sat up shakily—a white figure in the dim-lit room.

"Halt! Who goes there?" he called in a queer croaking voice, for his tongue was very dry, and he could articulate only with difficulty.

The stealthy figure stopped, looked into the muzzle of a Mauser pistol held in Steve's shaking hand, gave a quick gasp, backed hurriedly and fled, just as Steve collapsed fainting in the bed, his pistol rattling to the floor.

It was Ike.

We heard next day that he had been seen in the town, and had left again. What he was doing in our quarters we never found out. Whether he had heard or not that most of us were down with typhus, I cannot say. At anyrate we never saw him again. He had looked into Steve's half-mad eyes. Evidently he knew he had been very close to death.

And Steve. He could only remember it vaguely afterwards. For some queer reason of his own he had stuck to his Mauser all through his illness, hidden it away from the Sister, moved it about when his bed was

being made, constantly kept it by him. Once or twice Barclay had tried to persuade him to let him have it, but he always became so violent he gave it up.

"You only want a gun once in your life," Steve used to say. "But when you do, you want it mighty bad. Guess I'll keep mine."

It was an odd episode, and marked our final encounter with Ike. But I heard of him afterwards. He led a band of English nurses safely through Albania in the great retreat nine months later; and I can well remember seeing his portrait in the *Sphere*, with four laudatory lines of letterpress about "our gallant Serbian guide" underneath.

I have a feeling I never quite fathomed Ike.

Next day a wire arrived from the Chief: "Returning with two nurses"; and suddenly we all felt cheered up again. Of course, it was quite illogical. The extra help was as a drop in the ocean of our needs. The situation was not really lightened; but nevertheless we all felt better, and when the new arrivals appeared everyone became animated and bright again. It was something even to see people who had not been through our experiences. One of the nurses was fresh out from England; and we found her curiosity about the conditions, her eagerness to start in and be a help, quite stimulating. To some extent our sense of humour returned; and we were once more able to laugh as we recounted some of the comically woeful scenes we had gone through. As for me, in addition, my conscience was lightened. The other new nurse the Chief brought back was the derelict Englishwoman from Nish. Somehow I felt absurdly pleased over that.

* * * * * * * *

It was now the middle of February, 1915. All real fighting had ceased since Christmas, and no more fresh wounded were coming down the line from the Danubian

front. The country, however, was now infected with typhus fever on an epidemic scale, and the authorities seemed powerless to do anything to check its ravages. Stories circulated of whole villages down with it, towns where two or three thousand cases were lying in the hospitals without doctors, medicines, or any sort of skilled attention. Every big building up the line was said to be full to overflowing. Patients were dying in the streets. The doctors were dying. Greek doctors employed in their places were said to be neglecting their patients, or deserting their posts, or themselves also dying. Every one blamed the Austrian prisoners for introducing it; but as the disease is present every winter in Serbia it is more probable that the combination of refugees huddled in all sorts of unsuitable buildings, large masses of troops moving backwards and forwards, fighting under insanitary conditions, and an unexpected influx of prisoners for whom no suitable barrack accommodation had been provided, all combined to make the ordinary endemic condition epidemic.

The only person who seemed to have any grasp of the situation was the Premier, M. Pasitch. We heard that he had cabled to France and England asking for a Sanitary Mission of one hundred doctors from each country, and that these were being sent. In the meanwhile Sir Ralph Paget and our Chief were given almost autocratic powers in Uskub; and they again began to put pressure on the local authorities. What we wanted to do was to establish a typhus camp outside the town; and we asked once more for the Cadet School and Cavalry Barracks on the Kumanovo Road for this purpose. The situation was high and wind-swept. It was free of the town. Best of all, the buildings were new, with water laid on, and they had large dormitories suitable for wards, with bath-houses alongside. It was suggested I should run the Cadets' building, and Dr. Maitland of the Paget Unit the Cavalry Barracks.

The trouble was the barracks were occupied by

troops; there was a Cadet course going on in the School; and the Commandant still flatly refused to move.

We wrangled for several days.

Meanwhile, as I was to run our part of the camp when it was started, I went out to look over the ground.

It was a beautiful spring morning with the sun high overhead in a sky of fleecy blue, and the walk across the Vardar up past the Citadel on to the high level plateau above the town was most exhilarating. On a day like this it was impossible to feel downhearted. Beyond the Citadel I passed the village of the Tziganes. Most of the men had been conscripted, much against their will, to serve in the new levies being raised to replace the woefully depleted Serbian Army of 1914; but the village still teemed with children, dark-eyed, brown-skinned, with here and there a few slender girls and full-bosomed women gaudily clad, clinking with silver ornaments over comely foreheads and rounded necks.

They formed picturesque groups as they gossiped shrilly round the well by the wayside, pitcher on shoulders or poised on the top of their heads, glancing quick-eyed at the smart blue-tuniced Serbian officers riding past, totally ignoring the plodding blanket-clad peasants, proceeding citywards, with their donkeys laden with charcoal or bales of dried tobacco leaf for the Regie.

Two years before all this country had been Turkish; and further along a little Dervish Tekkah stood, low-walled around the domed tomb of the saint, overlooked by some tall poplars in a row standing sentinel clear against the sky. A solitary old Dervish appeared from nowhere daily to care for the tomb of the saint, and collect the offerings of the devout pushed through a slit in the wall. The dilapidation and general air of unkemptness did not suggest affluence, and as I passed I slipped a silver dinar through the slit, for there is nothing so pathetic to me as the decaying emblems of the faith of the under dog, whoever he may be.

Beyond the Tekkah, on the brow of the hill, a half-finished carriage drive led to a large, white, many-windowed building, which was the former palace of the Turkish Governor; and behind it some six or eight long barrack-like buildings were arranged.

This was the area for which I was looking.

The Palace, I found, was already a hospital. The other buildings behind were still occupied by troops. I made my way to the hospital.

A fresh-coloured, good-looking, rather slatternly Serbian woman of about thirty found me in the entrance hall. She greeted me in English and offered to take me round. From her I learnt that there were some 750 patients in the hospital, mostly from the new levies, and many of them had typhus. One Greek doctor and herself looked after them all with the help of Austrian prisoners. The three previous doctors had died of typhus, and this one, she said, was leaving. She asked me if I was taking over, and seemed disappointed when I answered:—

"No. We want to take the Cadet College and leave this as the hospital for troops."

I asked her if she was not afraid of getting typhus herself. She shrugged her shapely shoulders.

"No. Who cares? I don't. I haven't got it yet. I nursed all the three doctors who died. There seems to be a fate on the doctors. This one hasn't got it yet. If he does he'll die too." She glanced at me sombrely. "There's no luck with this place. Don't take it over. I like the English. I was stewardess on the Red Anchor Line before the war. That's why I can speak your tongue. If you like to take me I'll come to the other hospital with you." She looked at me suddenly. "Take me away from this. I would be very good to you," she added slowly, then looked away.

"I am sorry," I said gently. "I have three English nurses already."

She wilted at that. "I quite understand," she said, her voice trailing off.

The Greek doctor came up at this. He was wearing Serbian military uniform, and looked very tired. Still, he took me round courteously, and I got the impression that in a rough, practical way his hospital was as efficient as the materials at his disposal permitted.

All sorts of fever cases were lying in contiguous beds, and he differentiated between them empirically by pinching their toes as he passed. If they squirmed and drew up their feet he said they had typhus. I had no books with me, but I dimly remembered something I had read, possibly in Murchison, Graves or Stokes, about the "tender toes of typhus," and had the curiosity to try it on cases of my own later. There was no doubt that 60-80% responded to the test. But then we had a large proportion of cases that went on to gangrene of the extremities, a condition very uncommon in the better nursed, less debilitated cases one saw as a student in Ireland.

I developed a queer liking for this morose, tired man. He told me he was handing over to an Austrian doctor, a prisoner, and was himself going back to Salonika; but, with the odd Celtic foreknowledge of death that comes to one, I knew he never would, and I felt that the woman walking round with us knew it also, for she seemed to treat him with the kindness reserved for the doomed.

I think it was about two or three weeks later I saw him again. He developed the disease a week or ten days after my visit, and was taken at the instance of the Greek Consul to the Idahya Hospital, much to his distress, for he did not want to leave the woman.

When no one was watching, one afternoon he got out of bed, delirious, with some vague idea of going back to her, and in his clothes attempted to swim the Vardar, swollen with the bitter cold snow water from the Kara Dagh. Half way across he came on an island, and

there commenced to take his clothes off. A Serb soldier saw him from the bank, swam out and brought him back, swam out again and brought his clothes, and then, finding he had forgotten his boots, swam out again for them. My hospital had been started by that time and they brought him in to me. But he had double pneumonia, and the end was inevitable.

I remember his Consul coming to see me about him. He stood outside the hospital, and kept twenty yards from me. I could see he was very frightened of contagion. I asked him if he wanted to see the patient, and he hastily recoiled with a "*Non! Non! Mon Dieu! Non! Non!*" All he wanted to know was whether or not he was being treated as an officer. I reassured him on this point, and his official soul was satisfied. We buried him with full military honours next day.

The woman—I do not think she came to the funeral. I fancy she did not care for him much. At any rate, I never consciously saw her again. I believe she came through unscathed. What happened to her if she was still there when the Bulgars broke through in 1915, I do not care to imagine.

But to resume. Behind the hospital were a number of other buildings more or less occupied by troops, artillery sheds full of captured guns, and bivouac areas where groups of recruits, Albanians, Vlachs, Serbs, Tziganes still in their peasant costumes, were squatting round camp fires with piled arms alongside. Some were cooking, some cleaning their rifles, some idly smoking or watching the squads drilling awkwardly on the parade ground close by. All had the good humoured look of soldiery at their ease.

I glanced at the various buildings as I passed, calculating their potentialities as improvised hospitals. Further on I came to a long low run of cavalry stables, in front of which two sentries with fixed bayonets

promenaded. A foetid odour caught me by the throat as I entered; and as my eyes got accustomed to the half light I saw it was full of Austrian prisoners in blue-grey tattered uniforms, lying about in the straw of the stalls, dull-faced, apathetic, anæmic, pinched-looking. A smart looking gunner N.C.O. came quickly to attention. Even in these squalid surroundings he had managed to preserve his uniform, keep himself spick and span, retain his self respect. His quick eye took me in rapidly.

"You in charge here?"

"Yes, sir."

I was so accustomed to Austrians speaking good English, it did not surprise me in the least to learn he had been for years in London.

As we walked round the evil-smelling building I asked him questions.

Yes, the men fit to work went out daily road mending on the Kumanovo Road. If a man was not fit he did not go; but, of course, his rations were not so good. No, the Serbs didn't overwork them. Most of them were Croats—he was a Croat himself—and there was no ill-feeling against them. It was recognised they didn't want to fight the Serb. Doctoring! Well, if a man was sick he was supposed to report to the Greek doctor up at the hospital. Sometimes they did, sometimes they were too weak and ill to report. Then they just lay in the straw and died or recovered. It wasn't anyone's fault really. There was very little room in the hospital. The Greek doctor hadn't time to come down. There wasn't anyone else. No, he didn't blame the Serbs. They didn't get any more attention themselves when they were ill. Austria wasn't much better. Life was very cheap everywhere. It wasn't like England or America where public opinion wouldn't allow such things. He knew better, but the others didn't. They just lay down and died like dumb animals. He had had typhus himself—nearly died—

but somehow he had recovered. He talked on evenly, curiously detached. It made me feel sick.

I remember glancing into one stall.

"That man looks dead," I said.

"Yes, sir. He is. There's four dead this morning. When the working party comes back at noon, I'll have them dragged out and buried."

I had a look at the body. It was mottled with typhus. Two men were asleep in the stall beside what was left of their comrade. Some other man would take his place in the straw that night. There would be no disinfection, no isolation. His infected clothes and boots would be divided up amongst his fellow prisoners.

It was horrible, and yet it was inevitable. I knew representation to the military authorities would be useless. Their own problems were so difficult, they had no time to worry over prisoners of war. Even the fact that these prisoners were a constant source of danger to the troops around them made no difference.

There was nothing I could do except promise myself that when our hospital came there I would see they were looked after.

* * * * * * * *

That afternoon I heard that at last the military authorities had really been coerced, and we were to obtain the Cadet Buildings which lay to the north of the hospital and barracks visited by me during the morning.

I was out, therefore, with the Chief at nine next morning, and we found the building vacated. It was a long four-storeyed rectangular block, with dormitories in the centre, and small living rooms and offices at either end. It actually had lavatories and water laid on in the east wing; and we were overjoyed, for it was the nearest approach to anything that could be considered suitable for a hospital we had yet seen in Serbia.

And now succeeded a very busy period. We had a

huge empty building capable of containing six hundred sick, Serbian fashion, and about three hundred, English fashion. We compromised by promising to take four hundred as a maximum; and our job now was to find equipment and staff.

To assist us the Serbs gave me a "quartermaster," or as they called him a "magaziner." His duty was to collect the stores requisite, getting as much as possible from the Serbian Ordnance, and help us with advice as to where one could purchase the rest. Incidentally he was responsible to the Government for the safety of all these stores.

Our "magaziner" was a thick-set cheerful little man of about forty-five, with his close-cropped skull a mass of healed sabre cuts, a bright and merry eye, and an unfailing optimism. Whatever we wanted he agreed to at once with a quick "*dobro, dobro*" (all right), it shall be done.

We wanted to start at 2 p.m.—*dobro, dobro.*

We wanted a fatigue party of fifteen Austrians to whitewash the wards and corridors—*dobro, dobro.*

We wanted the keys of the various wards fitted and labelled—*dobro, dobro.*

Everything was *dobro.*

I got there at two o'clock. There was no "magaziner," no fatigue party, no keys, nothing doing.

At three o'clock, very irate, I went to the main hospital. No sign of the magaziner.

Eventually he arrived and I fell upon him. A pained look came over his face. He assured me he had been trying unsuccessfully all the morning to get the whitewash brushes out of Ordnance, finally having to buy them himself in the town. It distressed him very much to find censure instead of praise. He was bitterly disappointed. His attitude reduced me to apologetic impotence in five minutes; and we grew quite amicable when he finally arranged we should start at 8 a.m. next morning.

Plate XV.—" A little Dervish tekkah, low-walled around the tomb of the Saint " (see p. 261).

Plate XV.—The Cadet Building which we turned into a Typhus Hospital (p. 269).

My Austrian orderly James, who had now completely recovered from his typhus, was put in charge of the hospital building and the keys. I left him and the magaziner to work out indents for such labour and material as we required, and returned to report to the Chief.

Next morning found me at hospital very early and very impatient. James had marshalled his men, and they were working very slowly, very languidly, whitewashing with long pauses.

Poor devils, I did not wonder. They were all half starved anæmic Austrians just recovered from typhus. I had asked specially for men who had recovered, because of the danger of the work to those not "salted," and this was the best they could do for me. It was horrible to have to hustle them, but the work had to be done, and I hardened my heart, promising extra rations to all who were reported on favourably. To give them their due, Austrian prisoners generally worked well. They stole of course when they got the chance, they robbed the dead, they ate the patients' rations when they got the opportunity, but on the whole they were never actively unkind to the helpless, and when supervised they did their alloted tasks under conditions that must have been of necessity hard to men who ought all to have been in convalescent homes.

Occasionally one would drop dead when helping to carry a stretcher; but there was never any lack of candidates to fill the vacancies, as we saw that each orderly had a mattress to sleep on, a roof to cover him, definite hours of work which were not too laborious, and regular rations. We also saw that he was washed and clothed.

As it was obvious that it would take some days to get hospital equipment together, the Chief suggested that I should visit the No. 2 British Red Cross Unit at Vernjatskabanya while things were being arranged, in order to see what additional help I could get from them,

what stores they would let us have, and particularly if they could give us an ambulance. Hitherto we had not needed an ambulance, as we were alongside the station in our old hospital; but here we were three miles away, and with the improvement in the weather, and consequently in the so-called roads, we thought a motor ambulance might be usable. There was no such vehicle in all Southern Serbia, but we heard that the unit which had followed us had actually three of these luxuries. Perhaps they would lend us one. Also they had nurses —real nurses—some thirty or forty of them. We thought surely they could let us have a dozen, and maybe one or two doctors. We were all so tired, all so worn out. There were so few of us left, and here we were taking on the responsibility of this new big hospital, and trying to run it on proper hospital lines.

CHAPTER XI

THE END

How I started on the " Forlorn hope "—Nish and Stallash—How I made friends with a Jew pedlar and a Professor of Geology—The Inn at Krushevatz and the little Austrian—The episode of the chambermaid and the old Roumanian—Vrintski—The Villa Agnes and the two British units—Failure—A happy meeting with the English Professor—The curious behaviour of the guard—A "Slava" night—Nish and the Hunter Mission—A night with the Austrian spy—Taking on the Typhus Hospital—The fate of the " Magaziner "—We gather up the remnants of the unit—The Little Red Woman, boots and the O.C.P. of W. Camp—How the end came.

I REMEMBER I felt very depressed about that journey. It was the last week in February; I had been badly exposed to typhus some time previously, and was due to develop symptoms in two days, supposing I had caught the disease.

I dreaded falling ill amongst strangers who could not speak my language, hated the thought of being pushed into some unclean, horribly overcrowded hospital to die, felt, in fact, that I would give anything not to go.

But things dreaded are always worse in anticipation than in realization. When I got to the station I found, to my great joy, there was actually an " International Wagon-lit " on the train, part of the equipment of the old Orient Express which ran to Constantinople in the days, now so distant, when war was not, and frontiers merely map-readings in a Baedeker, interesting, of course, but of no practical importance from the traveller's standpoint.

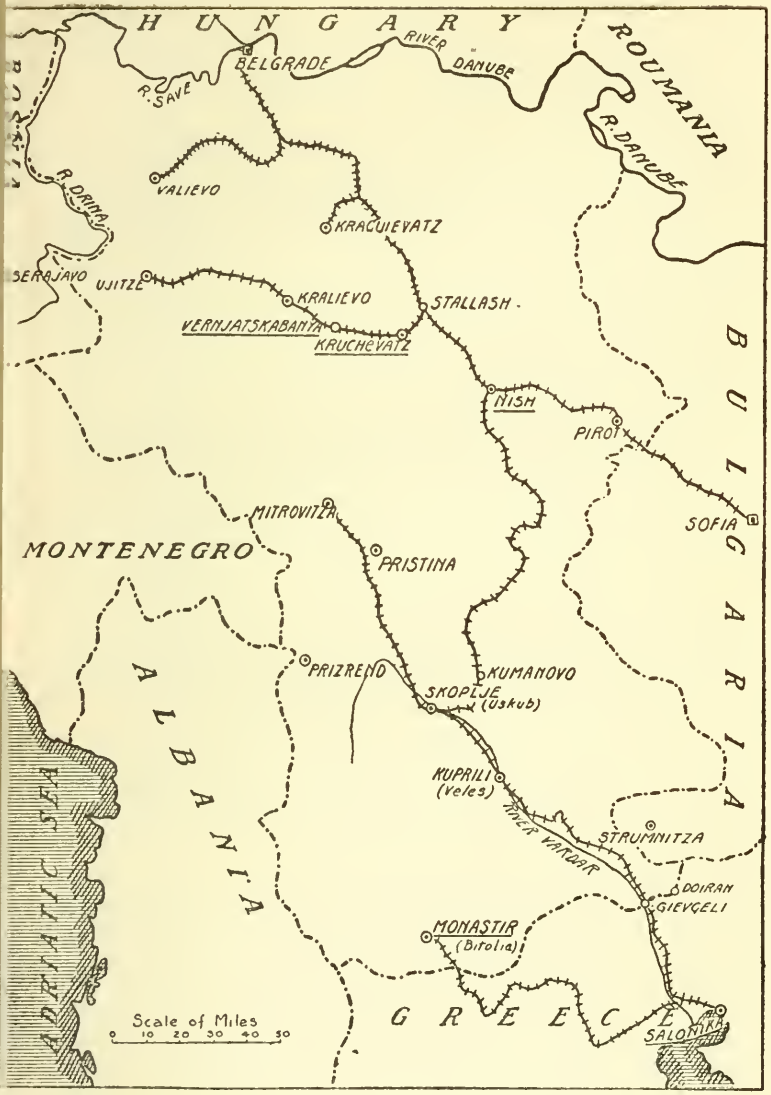
The mind is very much affected by material things. When I found, in addition, a really clean compartment

with fresh linen sheets and a genuine-looking steward with a "*Merci, Monsieur*" manner, the burden of my forebodings almost slipped from me.

Sharing my cubicle was a Serbian officer who had just returned from Italy. He produced a *Daily Telegraph*, not fourteen days old; and now I was almost hysterical with joy. I can still remember how eagerly I devoured the literary page. It was like manna in the wilderness, water in a thirsty land. There were things about the War, too—we had again captured five yards of a German trench, and the Bosch, in consequence, was on the verge of collapse. There were advertisements of theatres and concerts, drapery sales and auctions. I can still see myself lying in my bunk reading them all avidly, while my Serbian friend talked garrulously. It brought me back into a clean, sane world. I felt my sense of proportion returning. After all there were other things than typhus in life. I fell asleep hugging that thought, and woke up at Nish in the morning.

My final destination was a summer resort on the Western Morava, called Vernjatskabanya, where there is a famous hot spa. Here the Serbian Government had stationed our No. 2 British Red Cross Mission, and the Berry Unit of the Royal Free Hospital. The place was on a branch line running towards the Bosnian frontier, and I had been told in Uskub I should have to wait a day in Nish before I could get a connection. The stationmaster at Nish, however, thought otherwise. There was a train to Stallash at 10 a.m., he said; and after that I should have to trust to luck. I had arranged to pick up an interpreter at the Ruski Tzar, and take him on with me. I therefore hurried in a fiacre to the hotel, ordered breakfast and asked for my interpreter. Of course he was not there, and I decided not to wait for him. Ten o'clock, accordingly, found me back at the station and in the Belgrade train, which presently began to rumble slowly northward.

Everyone is very friendly in Serbia. Two officers


HUNGARY
RIVER DANUBE
BELGRADE
R. SAVE
ROUMANIA
R. DANUBE
R. DRINA
VALIEVO
KRAGUIEVATZ
SERAJAVO
UJITZE
KRALIEVO
STALLASH
VERNJATSKABANJA
KRUCHEVATZ
NISH
PIROT
BULGARIA
MITROVITZA
SOFIA
MONTENEGRO
PRISTINA
PRIZREND
KUMANOVO
SKOPIJE
(Uskub)
ALBANIA
KUPRILI
(Veles)
VARDAR
STRUMNITZA
DOIRAN
GIEVGELI
MONASTIR
(Bitolia)
ADRIATIC SEA
GREECE
SALONIKA
Scale of Miles
0 10 20 30 40 50

shared their lunch with me. It consisted of cubes of boiled pork and slabs of bread, washed down with rough red wine. It was an excellent lunch, and all went well until we arrived at Stallash about 1.30 in the afternoon. Here I had to change and say farewell to my kind friends, who were proceeding onwards to the Danubian front. And now my troubles commenced. There was no train to Vernjatskabanya (Vrintski) until the next day, and I was stranded. Stallash was simply a junction with a few houses and a disreputable, overcrowded, flea-ridden khan (inn), where there were several people lying ill with typhus. The prospect, therefore, of a stay overnight was not inviting. I made up my mind that if necessary I would sleep in the station. Luckily I had two days' rations in my haversack, and, with my mess tin and blankets, knew I could be quite comfortable. I proceeded, therefore, to boil some coffee on a Tommy's cooker, and made another excellent meal.

Thus fortified, things seemed to brighten. The people around became more interesting—peasant women wrapped up in sheepskin coats, ragged soldiers in sandalled feet, nondescript civilian refugees, Austrian prisoners, all looked more companionable.

I made friends with a Jew pedlar who spoke bad French, and a mild-looking little old gentleman with a white beard, who knew a little English and turned out to be the Professor of Geology in the University of Belgrade.

When the latter heard I was trying to get to what the Serbs called "Sir Lipton's Mission," he became most helpful. The Serbs had been immensely impressed by Sir Thomas Lipton. He had brought out the No. 2 British Red Cross Unit in his yacht, and this and the "Berry Unit" the Serbs persisted in calling after his name, as they were both in the same place. The Professor knew all about them. He confirmed what I had gathered from the stationmaster, that I could not get to Vrintski (Vernjatskabanya) before the

next afternoon, but suggested I could go on to the city of Krushevatz, more than half way, stop in one of the hotels there overnight, and finish the rest of the journey next morning. There was a train to Krushevatz at 4.30, and he was going there. If I liked, etc. I did like.

We travelled cheerfully in the guard's van, the Professor and I, the little Jew pedlar who stuck to us with the submissive pertinacity of his race, and a large overflowing gentleman, very frightened of typhus, who sprinkled his clothes frequently with powdered naphthaline to protect himself from infection. Krushevatz proved to be a largish place of no particular beauty, situated on a hill overlooking the valley of the Western Morava. At the station, where there were a lot of Austrian prisoners lounging about, the fat man and the little Jew pedlar disappeared. The Professor, however, took possession of me, secured a boy to carry my kit bag, and took me with him to what he stated was the only possible hotel.

It was a low rambling khan, built four-square round a courtyard after the Turkish manner. A harassed-looking head waiter, obviously an Austrian, received the Professor's request for a room for me with visible reluctance. I do not know what was said to him, but my friend seems to have enlarged on my importance, and eventually he relented. It might be managed. There was a room which might be shared with a chambermaid (*sobarica*) and another visitor (*drugi gospodin*), if I did not object. The room, it appeared, belonged to the chambermaid, but that did not seem to matter. I said I was quite content to share the room with the "*drugi gospodin*" if I did not have to share the bed. That was all right. There was a second bed, but there might be some trouble dispossessing the chambermaid to whom it belonged, and who, apparently, had not objected to the *drugi gospodin*, an old man, sleeping in the other. I said I would chance the chambermaid, said good-bye to my kind friend, and deposited my kit

in the room, which turned out to be quite clean, had whitewashed walls, a stone floor and two beds, each covered with one of the big, multi-coloured, padded quilts characteristic of the Levant.

Then I went back to the long, low common room in the front of the house, where some thirty or forty men sat eating and drinking at small tables. Most of them seemed to be Serbian and Austrian N.C.O.'s, all drinking amicably together. There were a number of civilians, and a few women. In my British uniform I was an object of curiosity to them. They were not quite sure of me. I was taken, as usual, for a Russian.

Presently a little old man sidled casually into the room, looked round, came leisurely to my table and sat down. He began to talk to me in quite fair English, and I accepted the opening, pleased to be able to use my native tongue again after twenty-four hours of bad French and worse Serbian. Of course I was quite conscious that I was being pumped politely. The military authorities were very much on the alert for spies. We were not far from the Bosnian frontier, and they wanted to know. As I had nothing to conceal, I talked quite freely. The little man grew more and more friendly. His task, he found, was more pleasant than he had anticipated.

By now the low-raftered room was getting gradually more and more crowded. There was a babel of conversation. A tall, dark Montenegrin, his little red cap somewhat askew, much in his cups, was boasting loudly of the number of men he had killed, and displaying a heavy cavalry sabre which he said he had taken in mortal combat from a Turkish officer. Several Albanians and Vlachs in sheepskin coats were drinking noisily in the corner behind me. The smell of koniak, slevovitza, rakiya, stale beer, musty garments and contraband tobacco grew more and more powerful. People still glanced at me and the little man who had evidently been sent to interrogate me. A tall young

officer, walking with exaggerated steadiness, came over, glanced contemptuously at my companion and challenged me to drink with him. I rose, touched his glass with mine, smiled, bowed and sat down again. He returned to his table, satisfied. I gathered that he meant to convey that he, at any rate, was quite willing to accept me as a comrade and a friend of Serbia, without question.

By now I began to feel quite sorry for the little man, growing more and more restive opposite me, who was evidently not in his element in this drinking den. At length he suggested that, instead of having supper at the inn, I should go to his house as a guest. I agreed at once.

It was a charming, clean little place. Everything was shining—the brass, the steel, the wood stove, the furniture, the stone floor covered with Turkish rugs, the bookshelves lined with pleasant companionable-looking books glistening in the lamp-light, the arm-chairs in bright chintz, the table on which we had our supper, the china, and, last of all, the neat little flaxen-haired Gretchen, cook, housemaid and butler all combined, who looked after it all and him. It was obviously the home of a scholar.

I began to see where I was. My host was an Austrian Jew interned with his little maid, cut off by the sudden vortex of war from his wife and family. He had lived for years in Krushevatz, and could talk intelligently on the customs, ceremonies, ideals, art and literature of the country. I had a most pleasant evening. The little maid slipped in and out, put food before us, swept the empty dishes away, kept the wood fire going quietly and expeditiously. And all the while, he talked with the joy of a bottled man finding an unexpectedly appreciative listener. I asked him how he had learned to speak English so well, having never been in the country. He produced an edition of Dickens with English and German on alternate pages. He told me he had taught

himself in this way. His favourite was "David Copperfield." The English in that was easier to follow than in most of the others, he said; but he had read them all, and knew much more about them than I did.

When at length I rose to go, he pressed me to stay the night, pointing out that the hotel was full of typhus, the landlord had just died of it, and everything was suspect. I could see, however, that there was really no extra room in the house, and satisfied him by promising to come to breakfast. Then I went back through a cold night of stars to the khan.

In my room I found the other guest just about to retire, an old Roumanian gentleman with a high astrakhan conical hat which he wore even in bed. He smiled pleasantly at me, wrapped himself in his quilt, and lay down with all his clothes on. I decided to imitate him, and was just proceeding to do so when the door opened and a large pink-cheeked Serbian girl came into the room without knocking. This was the chambermaid whose bed I had commandeered. Apparently she had been told nothing about it, and the old gentleman seemed very much amused as he explained, whilst I sat and smiled and waited to see how she would take it. At first she did not like it at all. Then she grew more calm; and eventually, as a way out of the difficulty, she suggested that she should sleep on the floor. To that the old man agreed, and both of them seemed surprisedly amused, in consequence, when I gave them to understand, in a mixture of French, Serbian, German and general gesture, that I'd rather she didn't. Finally, I made her understand that, if there really was no other place in the khan, I should have to sleep on the floor of the dining-room and let her have the bed. This suggestion seemed quite unexpected to both the old gentleman and the girl, and eventually we compromised. She said she could sleep with one of the other chambermaids; I presented her with a large slab of "Chocolate Menier" and two silver dinars, and she

departed smiling. Then I bolted the door firmly, turned in, top-boots tunic and all, and listened in the darkness to the old gentleman chuckling away to himself over my strange behaviour.

In the morning when I woke up he was gone, and I found I had been wakened by the entrance of the smiling chambermaid with hot water. Apparently she bore me no ill will, for she packed my blankets and tackle deftly in my kit bag, got me my bill, wished me Godspeed, and waved her hand to me from the doorway as I walked out of the courtyard into the morning sun.

I have often wondered since how she fared when the Austrians broke through and captured the place in the following autumn. Well, I hope. She had a bright eye.

Walking through Krushevatz in the early morning, I was able to see the greater part of the city on my way to breakfast with the interned Austrian. The place stands on a wind-swept plateau, overlooking the Western Morava. It has some fine buildings, nearly all turned into hospitals at that time, and one large memorial group of statuary erected to the memory of that legendary figure in Serbia's tragic history, Tzar Lazar, vanquished on the field of Kossovo, on the fatal 15th June, 1389. It is a date which has become part of the heritage of memory to every Serbian child, for it has been celebrated in cycles of epic poems by wandering "gooslars" at fairs and in the winter evenings throughout the five hundred years that followed. It is the date on which Serbia lost her independence, and passed, apparently for ever, under the misrule of the Ottoman Turk.

Looking up at the great winged figure that morning, I hoped that these free-loving people would never again fall under a foreign yoke. Then I hastened my step, for I was beginning to feel very hungry.

An excellent breakfast, served by the deft-fingered Gretchen, awaited me. The little Austrian proved

again an admirable host. I knew, of course, that he had to report on me, and was not at all surprised, therefore, when he suggested I should pay my respects to the Town Commandant before I left. So we set out together, and presently arrived at the Hotel de Ville. When we were ushered into the "presence," the Commandant was quite courteous, but he questioned my host very sharply, and examined my papers most carefully. Finding everything correct, he at length permitted himself to smile. The little man, I gathered, had not been allowed to move more than a mile from the city since August 1914. Now, as a reward for the able manner in which he had satisfied the authorities I was not a spy, and to make assurance doubly sure, he was given a permit to accompany me to Vernjatska-banya, and we went off to the train together, very cheerfully. A number of grey-coated Austrian prisoners were working in the station yard, unloading waggons. One of them, a bright-eyed happy-looking boy, fell into conversation with me. He was a barber, he said; his last job had been in Camden Town, and he was looking forward to the time when he could get back there again. He slept, he told me, in a truck at night, covered by a tarpaulin, and infinitely preferred it to the stuffy barracks where the other prisoners herded together for warmth.

"No fear," he said. "I don't want to get typhus; and besides I can have a bath in the engine tank every day, and keep clean. These others are dirty Magyars. Me, I am a Croat," he added, smiling delightfully and showing his strong white teeth.

I gave him a copy of the *Weekly Times*, and he simply devoured it. Probably he had not seen a paper of any sort for months. As the train began to steam slowly from the station, he ran after us.

"So long!" he cried. "See you in London soon!"

I sometimes wonder what became of him. Did he escape the typhus? How did his youthful optimism

survive the next four years? Where is he now, if he survived? I hope he has come through.

The ride to Vrintski, the short name for Vernjatska-banya, was without incident. I found that the town itself was some two miles from the station, and consisted mainly of red-roofed villas and summer hotels. Built and exploited by Austrian capital as an inland watering-place in the years before the war, it looked to me, fresh from the squalor of Uskub, like a paradise amongst the pine-clad hills. The whole place was so home-like it almost seemed unreal. At the Villa Agnes, where Captain Bennett, at that time head of the No. 2 Red Cross Mission, had his headquarters, I felt like rubbing my eyes to see if I were not dreaming I was in Wimbledon.

There was a garden and railings, steps up to the door, a bell, a real hall and staircase, and even "modern conveniences"—the first I had seen in Serbia. It was almost unbelievably comfortable in a Mid-Victorian way.

And then their hospital, the "Zlalibor," a converted hotel, and the trim nurses, the orderlies, sixty of them, the stores, drugs, dressings, real splints, X-ray plant, bedding, linen, all the outfit of a first-class hospital—it made my heart ache with envy. And two motor cars—an ambulance and a lorry. I thought of our poor old ramshackle wagonette, in which six to eight cases, typhus, small-pox, diphtheria, typhoid, relapsing, sitting up huddled close together, would be driven in the rain by a ragged little urchin to the Polymesis. I thought of our hundreds of cases with practically no nursing. I thought of the pitiful little tray of tablets we had for medicine, of the total absence of splints, of the non-existence of linen, of all the thousand and one things we hadn't got, and wanted so badly.

The afternoon I spent going round the "Terapia," the hospital of the "Berry Mission," after I had seen that of our No. 2 Unit.

I can well remember that evening, talking in a circle round the firelight in Mr Berry's mess, telling them of what we were doing, of what we were up against, of the hopeless inadequacy of our resources. Looking back on it now, I feel that I must have appeared almost hysterical to them. I wanted help so badly. They had all the facilities. It seemed to me the obvious thing that, instead of being where they were, they should have been with us in the thick of it. To me it appeared that they were on a side track, playing with the thought of work, looking for interesting surgical cases which they would treat on the leisurely sound English lines to which they were accustomed at home. It seemed to me they were dodging their responsibilities. I thought there would be no surgical work for them, that they would rust from disuse, that to keep them where they were was a scandalous waste of good material, badly required elsewhere.

Looking back on it now, with the later experience of four years spent largely in administration, I recognize that I was wrong. There was work and to spare for all of them where they were—their records afterwards proved that this was so. Unused as yet to the swift changes of war, where one day there is nothing, and on the next one is overwhelmed with work, I did not grasp the strategic intentions of the Serbian Government in placing them there. I did not understand then the wisdom of keeping units up to full strength to cope with every emergency. I would have taken half of them at once, and used them uselessly, trying to stem the typhus flood, throwing useful lives away in a hopeless attempt to achieve the impossible. I know better now.

But to me at the time the whole affair was a fight of individuals to save individual lives, not a concerted attempt to save thousands by proper prophylactic methods—the method which ultimately proved such a marvellous success under Colonel Hunter's scheme. I

own now I was utterly wrong, but at the time I was bitterly disappointed.

A number of nurses came to me privately, brave, wonderful women that they were, and said they would gladly volunteer if I asked for them. One fine young woman, Dr. Chick, told me she would come back with me if her unit would release her. But I could not accept the responsibility of this. Neither of the units could help me officially with doctors, nurses or stores, and I would not ask for them unofficially. I left, therefore, for Uskub on the following morning, having accomplished nothing, feeling utterly defeated and despondent.

It was a beautiful clear spring morning when I set out, and there was an air of sleepy calm about the clean little town, with its red roofs nestling in the green, which made it seem curiously detached from the hurry and squalor of war, the horrible sickening odour of disease, the rush and turmoil of endeavour. One could have dreamt happily amongst these hills, happily in a fearful way because of the known unrest outside the charmed circle.

I had ordered a carriage to take me over the two miles of muddy track, they called a road, to the station. It had been very carefully ordered. I had been assured by no less a person than the Town Major that it would be punctual. Characteristically, of course, it never turned up, and I was proposing to walk with my kit bag over my shoulder, accompanied by the little Austrian, when I heard myself being hailed by a friendly voice from a passing fiacre, asking if I wanted a lift. It was an old friend, Professor Wiles of the Paget Unit, who had wandered into the town on the night before, and was returning that day to Nish.

Have you noticed, when things appear at their worst, how something turns up unexpectedly and the sun comes out again? I had been dreading that long thirty-six hours to Nish, alone with my sense of failure,

wishing it was over, wishing I had never come, irritated extremely by that last straw, the non-appearance of my carriage. And here was carriage and cheerful companionship and good talk all in one. My spirits recovered rapidly.

The Professor, after his agglutinative manner, had picked up another companion, an odd-looking little waiter from one of the hotels, whose only baggage seemed to be an atomiser filled with some antiseptic fluid with which he continually sprayed himself, and wished to spray us also, assuring us it was a sovereign specific against the typhus. Of course it was quite useless, but it gave him a blind courage, and that in itself was a valuable asset.

We dropped the little Austrian at Krushevatz with many polite regrets, and travelled on gaily to Stallash again. The Professor, talking fluent Serbian, collected everyone within hearing distance round him by his kindly enthusiastic aura. With such a companion one's journey was a sort of Royal progress. We talked and laughed and ate each other's luncheons—the inevitable bread, salt boiled bacon and red wine—seated in a cattle truck labelled "Chevaux 10 hommes 40," a form of conveyance with which, later, millions of British army men must have become only too familiar.

At Stallash we were again on the main Belgrade-Nish line; and here we were told that there was no train onwards until the next day. It was now late in the evening, and the Professor and I began to wonder where we could pass the night.

Remembering the inn just behind the station which I had seen on the way up, I thought we would have a look inside. We found it crowded with unkempt soldiery; the public rooms were indescribably filthy; and they said there was typhus in the house.

"It seems to me, Professor, this is exactly not the place to stop," I said.

The Professor laughed cheerily.

"Why should we stop anywhere!" he cried. "It is a beautiful night, mild and with the stars for guidance. Why not let us walk into the clean open country? Tobacco and good talk will be our company. We can come back at dawn."

I looked at the Professor, a large, blond man, loosely built, carelessly dressed and full of enthusiasm. It was just such a proposal as I should have expected from him. As for me, I had such a horror of typhus I dreaded sleeping in any strange bed, and the idea therefore appealed strongly to me.

"Why not?" I exclaimed. And so, away we started.

But we had reckoned without the military machine. We were foreigners, very friendly foreigners no doubt, but still it would do no harm to keep an eye on us—quite unobtrusive—no disrespect meant—really for our safety. Looking back on it now, as a soldier, I can see that the Commandant at the station was quite right.

No sooner, therefore, had we started out than an armed figure detached itself from the lounging group outside the station, and followed us just twenty yards behind, stopping when we stopped to light our pipes, moving on when we moved. When we had gone perhaps half a mile along an upward climbing road, and had reached the end of the village, a sentry challenged. We answered him in the usual manner, and the sentry let us pass. Then, as our guard reached him:

"What is it, Stefan?" he said.

"Two fool Englishmen, waiting for the morning train, whom I have to guard all night," answered our follower crossly. The Professor grasped my arm and chuckled softly as he interpreted.

"What do they want?"

"The good God knows. My orders are to follow, but not molest them," he answered, adding rather wearily: "I wish it had been someone else's duty to-night. My wife is ill, and I should be at home with her."

The professor swung round sharply. He had followed the conversation easily, and now lost all his amusement.

"What is the matter with your wife?" he said abruptly, to the surprise of both speakers.

"She has strong fever on her these four days, and the women think it is the black typhus. There is no doctor, and we do not know what to do for her," the man answered humbly.

After all, our guard was only a poor distracted husband, tricked out with a rifle, kept in Stallash probably because he was not fit for active service at the front. The Professor interpreted, looked at me, and I nodded.

"The English doctor here will look at your wife," he said.

There seemed to be a dozen people sitting up in the big comfortable kitchen when we entered. They were mostly women, and they talked quietly as if under tension.

I left the Professor with them whilst I went into the bedroom beyond to see the patient. It was the usual low-roofed Serbian bedroom with its big bed covered with gay quilted rugs, its oleograph of King Peter, its wood stove in the middle of the room, and the little "Ikon" of the family saint in one corner with a tiny burning candle floating in water in front of it.

A glance at the woman was sufficient, the spotted rash was already fully developed. But I took her temperature and pulse, listened to her chest, just to satisfy her frightened feverish eyes. The relatives in the kitchen accepted the verdict stoically. No doubt they had already anticipated it. The Professor interpreted while I told them what to do, ending up by telling them I had a feeling she was going to get well. It was then, I think, that the husband broke down. We left him there, his post as guard apparently forgotten, and prepared to go out into the night again.

But by now the Professor had made friends with everyone in the kitchen, the fact that he spoke Serbian

having opened every house in the village to him. Invitations rained on us. Finally the local member for the Skupshtina carried us off to a "Slava."

The "Slava" is an institution apparently confined to the Slavonic races. There is nothing quite like it amongst Western people, the nearest approach being the birthday celebrations. Every Serb is named after some patron saint, and his "Slava" therefore falls on the Saint's day.

It is the most important day in the year in every household; and its celebration is a curious mixture of religious rites and social relaxation. There are elaborate formulas, greetings, toasts, all stereotyped by centuries of custom. The Professor talked to me of these as we went.

"It will be half over, I am afraid, before we get there," he said, "but we must eat of the Slava cake, and we shall be in time for some at least of the 'seven great toasts.' It will keep us occupied until the morning."

Presently we arrived at the house, and our sponsor called out loudly through the open door, according to the accepted formula:

"O master of this house, art thou willing to receive guests?"

An old man came out, and they embraced. We were then introduced, and according to instructions I said, after the Professor:

"May thy 'Slava' be happy."

To this the reply was:

"And may thy soul be happy before God."

"Now we can go in," said the Professor.

The room was full of comfortable looking people sitting round a long table, in the centre of which was a tall yellow wax candle. The eldest daughter of the house, a comely red-cheeked damsel, poured water over our hands and proffered us a towel. We were then given seats; and roast pig and "rakiya" (plum whisky)

were put before us. Everyone was smoking; everyone was merry; no one seemed to have a care in the world. The contrast with the scene I had just come from was complete.

The toasts we had interrupted recommenced. Apparently every Serb is a natural after-dinner speaker, and the toasts were most eloquent. Eventually our sponsor, who was a noted orator, rose. It was evident the guests assembled expected something extra fine. They got it. Even the Professor became enthusiastic, interpreting as it came. It was a lament about the war and the unnatural alliance between the Austrian and the Turk, the Christian and the Moslem.

Always the Turk had been the hereditary enemy, and the eyes of the Serb looked ever guardedly towards the East from whence came all his dangers. Always he had felt his back secure, for always he had been protected, supported from the West. It had been so from the earliest times, and the Serb had come to consider it would be always so, unchangeable as the stars in their courses. And now they were fighting the West . . . . . .

It was a long speech, and seemed to be the peroration of the banquet, for the proceedings terminated soon after, and the various guests began to make farewell.

Our train to Nish was due to leave at 4.30, and though we were pressed by our kind friends to remain, we preferred to get back in good time.

We arrived in Nish about nine in the morning, and our first thought was for breakfast. We therefore made straight for the Ruski Tzar, and I felt that my adventure was over. I had been there so often now, the place was almost homelike. I even knew a number of the habitués, for most of the Correspondents of the French and English papers still had their meals there. Breakfast over, the Professor left me after we had arranged to lunch together; and I spent half an hour smoking and talking leisurely to the little lame correspondent of the *Daily Mail*, before I set out into the town.

It was a raw March morning with a cutting wind. There was a powder of snow on the streets, and I was walking slowly along thinking of where I could buy some copper cauldrons for my typhus hospital, when I was taken completely by surprise.

Standing at a street corner, looking rather cold and lost, were six British R.A.M.C. officers, all young lieutenants, very smart and trim in their neat well-cut khaki, making me feel how shabby I must appear in my battered old Red Cross uniform.

Evidently they had arrived that morning. I fell upon them eagerly. They informed me they were part of a Sanitary Mission of 25 officers, under the command of Colonel William Hunter, sent out by the War Office in response to the urgent request of the Serbian Government. I remembered then that we had advised that 200 doctors should be asked for from France and England, and came to the conclusion this must be the British response. I looked at these clean-cut, fresh-looking boys, and wondered what earthly use they could possibly be. I own I was bitterly disappointed, knowing that if all we heard were true, even two hundred of them would not be anything like enough to handle the masses of cases reported.

Now, six years later, I can freely admit I was wrong, for the twice-told tale of the wonderful change they wrought on the whole situation is known to every student of the great epidemic. But, at the time, I thought they would simply be wasted. I was too near the work, too occupied with the details of treatment, to envisage what could be done by a broad policy of preventative administration such as was adopted, and to which I may briefly refer later.

I made friends with the group; gave them such local information as I thought would be useful; told them where they could exchange their sovereigns for thirty dinars silver instead of the twenty-six of the Official Serbian Bank; and arranged to meet them all at lunch

at the Colonna Restaurant at one o'clock. Then I went off to tackle the question of boilers.

One o'clock found me at the Colonna, where I made the acquaintance of Colonel Hunter and his second-in-command, Major (afterwards Lieut.-Col.) Stammers, R.A M.C. In addition, I discovered representatives of yet another Mission, that of Dr. Clemow, late of the Embassy at Constantinople, which was going on to Montenegro. Altogether some thirty British doctors, with Sir Charles Des Gras, our Minister, Colonel Harrison, the military attaché, several Serbian War Office officials and Professor Wiles made up a large and cheery company; and I found myself recovering considerably from the pessimism of the morning.

The Montenegrin unit, under the capable command of Dr. Clemow, was going by rail to Uzitze, near the Bosnian frontier, and from there proposed to trek by ox-wagon across Novibazar. As they would be retracing the journey I had just made, the Professor, who was returning, offered to go with them as far as Vrintski; and I left them, therefore, sight-seeing in the afternoon, and went to the office of the Command to arrange for my berth on the Wagon-lit that night to Uskub. A knowledge of Serbian methods, however, made me go down to the station, an hour before the train left, to see that my berth was really reserved. It was lucky I did, for the same berth, I found, had been given to a member of the Rockefeller Mission, and on comparing notes I found he had priority. A little backsheesh worked the oracle, however. I was given another berth, being most careful not to enquire to whom it really belonged, and found myself fellow passenger with a gentleman from Sofia, who told me he was a Roumanian. Perhaps he was. At any rate we talked pleasantly in bad French as the train sped onwards in the night, and he plied me with questions. He was of a most enquiring mind. I put my despatch case down on the little table between our berths, and went

out for perhaps ten minutes to talk to the American. When I returned the case had been moved, the order of the contents was not as it had been, and my companion was half asleep. I took no notice, and presently he roused up again, and we restarted talking. Casually I turned the conversation on to the appalling state of disease amongst the Austrian prisoners, telling him of the many thousands that were dead and dying amongst them, recounting what was being done and how much was being left undone. I could see he was painfully moved. I felt sorry for him; but he should have respected my private belongings. There was nothing of any interest in them to anyone except myself, and he ought to have known that no one except a fool would have left important documents around loosely for any stranger to scrutinize. I must have made him very miserable that night.

Afterwards, I heard they caught him at the frontier.

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I had been nearly a week away from Uskub without any news of our unit; and the first thing I did was to make for the quarters to see how all our people were.

Barclay and the Sister met me smiling. All our men were out of danger. Sherlock, the Little Woman and Steve were rapidly recovering. I reported the non-success of my mission to the Chief, but apparently he had not expected much, for he did not seem disappointed.

Then I asked for all the latest news, and found that things seemed to have been moving. I was told that I really could take over my new hospital next day, that everything was in order, and patients would be coming in almost immediately. That was good. I also heard that a completely new English unit, sent out by the Serbian Relief Fund, had just arrived, and were looking for a suitable building in which to start a hospital.

That evening I met two of their doctors at the Con-

sulate, and once more found myself explaining that there was no surgery, and if they really wanted to be of use there was nothing for them to do except tackle typhus. Apparently they had been round that day and discovered this for themselves, but were not yet able completely to disassociate their minds from their original idea.

Next morning, Sister Rowntree and I drove out to take over our typhus hospital. All the while I had been away at Nish and Vrintski, the Magaziner and James with his Austrian orderlies had been getting the place ready for us, putting in the beds, filling large canvas sacks with straw to make mattresses, fitting up cooking arrangements, collecting pillows, sheets, knives, forks, plates, cups, etc., from Ordnance.

We had thought out an elaborate plan for disinfecting each patient on arrival, so that we could start the hospital clean. There was an excellent wash-house near the hospital, in which the troops used to bathe, a good water supply, and a fair quantity of wood for heating purposes. It was arranged that patients, before admission, should be brought to the wash-house, stripped of their infested garments, have a hot bath and a hair-cut, be clothed in clean nightshirts, and then admitted. Their infested clothing was to be labelled carefully, boiled in carbolic (our only method of disinfection), dried and packed away. Everything would then be ready for reissue to its owner on discharge.

All the men in charge of this disinfecting station were to be Austrian orderlies who had recovered from typhus, as obviously the risk to non-immune persons was too great to be permissible.

Theoretically it sounded perfect, and later on it worked admirably, but unfortunately the patients were ready before the bathing arrangements. Thirty cases, indeed, arrived on our first morning, and, as we could not wash them, we had to content ourselves with smearing them all over with paraffin oil, cutting their

Plate XVI.—Typhus patients coming into hospital, clad in nightshirts after disinfection (p. 291).

hair to get rid of nits, clothing them in hospital pyjamas and admitting—hoping for the best.

When I first discovered we could not wash these new arrivals, I turned furiously upon James, to be met with the excuse that the Magaziner had not been near the place for a week, and he could get nothing done without him. I sent for the Magaziner urgently, the stout bullet-headed little man whom I had left in charge of the Quartermaster's duties before I went up country less than a fortnight before. I remember I was rehearsing irritably to myself what I would say to him, how I would deal with his flimsy excuses, how I might best pulverise him, when the answer to my summons came back through James:

"Command report, sir, that our Magaziner died of typhus yesterday morning, and a new one will be posted to duty as soon as possible."

I confess I felt rather sick and shaken for some moments. I had liked the little man. He had done his best for me. He had died at his post. I felt glad we had parted friends.

But meanwhile the work had to be attended to, the patients fed, arrangements made for more and more arrivals, indents hurried, a lot of leeway made up. James, perforce, had to act as Quartermaster, and the Command did not like it, for he was only an Austrian prisoner. But they found it impossible to get us a Serb Magaziner in his place. No one wanted the post. It was too dangerous. And so he carried on.

We had endless troubles. Cases arrived and we had beds for them but no mattresses—we could not get enough straw. Indents for food supplies had to be sent in the day before, and we never knew how many new patients were coming. Once we indented for 100 extra diets, and got two hundred new admissions. Sometimes wood ran out and we could not warm the place or cook the food. Sometimes oil ran out and we could not get round at night in the dark. All the

troubles a good Quartermaster would have foreseen and provided against happened to us, for besides being busy trying to treat the cases, I was so handicapped by inability to speak the language through the 'phone that I could not get what I wanted, and James was ignored when he complained for me.

Still, we got along. The Sister and I had now settled in our new quarters. We had five English orderlies, and over a hundred Austrian bolnitchers all of whom were supposed to have had typhus. Some of them, of course, had not, and got it at once. We just dumped them in with the other patients and carried on. But I had a feeling all the time that the job was too much for us. We were tired out. We had no real hospital requisites, no nursing staff, no decent supply of drugs. We felt we were simply housing typhus, not treating it. Two of the doctors of the unit which had just arrived came round the wards one day with me, when I was in this mood. I showed them some of the more interesting cases, especially those with gangrene of the extremities, toes and feet, ears and noses. They were beginning to get fascinated by the disease. I had had a very worrying day, felt very tired, knew that their entire unit was simply marking time, and ended by suggesting that by far the best thing for all of us would be for them to take over our whole show, and let us go home.

Next day, however, I felt better. We had now got three large kitchen boilers to make proper stew for the patients. I found to my surprise that twenty Tzigane women I had asked for had actually arrived to wash the infected garments, and there was at length enough wood to get our wash-house started. In addition, two pounds of tobacco arrived from my brother, and I had a lot of cheery letters. We had some four hundred and fifty typhus cases in hospital, and, in spite of everything, some were actually getting well.

Life was not so bad after all. I actually found time to go for an afternoon stroll in the bright spring sun-

shine. It was a lovely day, and across the plain, not a mile off, was a long old Roman viaduct which I wanted to explore. So I walked across and spent a happy hour clambering over its broken arches, examining the wonderful brick-work still as tough as it was a thousand years before. Some old almond trees grew near. They were in full bloom, and I came back with my arms full of branches whose sweet smelling blossoms were a joy to us for days in the mess-room.

Meanwhile, our old friends, the Paget Unit (No. 1 Serbian Relief Mission) had taken over the building next to us, and some barracks across the campus which they proposed to run as a typhus hospital. In order to do this, they had turned half their unit into a typhus staff, leaving the rest to carry on their old surgical hospital in the town. This made us feel less isolated.

Next day, Lady Paget, who had been helping to clean up the old barracks to make them fit for patients, developed typhus herself, and we took her into our quarters. A few days later, Dr. Knobel, one of her unit who was looking after refugees in the town, also got the disease, and in he came, too. We thus had two acute cases in our quarters; but by now little things like that did not disturb us much. We smeared ourselves over with crude paraffin oil from head to toes twice daily, and this appeared to be practically a specific. No lice would touch us. We reeked of paraffin. It was most unpleasant, but it seemingly meant safety. Indeed, I have never heard of anyone using it conscientiously who got the disease. Most of the nurses of the Paget Unit were now dressed in pyjamas, wore rubber boots into which the lower ends of their trouser legs were tucked, had rubber gloves which went over the ends of the sleeves, and wore face masks. They were therefore practically lice-proof. We seemed now to be all fairly in our stride. It looked as if we would be able to tackle things properly.

And then, quite suddenly, the number of admissions

began to decline; less and less cases arrived; we had actually a few spare beds. It seemed as though the crest of the epidemic had been reached, and it was now on the decline. As a matter of fact this was only partially true. The great prophylactic measures which were being started in upper Serbia could not at that time have affected us. What had happened was that we were not now receiving cases from up the line, for all traffic on the railway had been stopped, and, in addition, the local outbreak in Uskub itself was lessening. All this we learnt of later. The immediate effect on us, however, was that we ceased to be overworked, and had time to think of other things.

By this time Sherlock and the Little Red Woman were quite out of danger, and were developing enormous appetites. Steve also was convalescing, and all our orderlies had practically recovered. It seemed a favourable opportunity to close our old quarters in the nunnery, and bring the rest of the unit up to this healthy wind-swept place. We therefore got them up during the next few days—a rather white, feeble-looking lot, but very cheerful and full of thankfulness to be clear of it all.

Barclay, thus released, was able to help me in my typhus hospital; and Sherlock, in spite of the fact that he had a "white leg" after the typhus, insisted on supervising the disinfecting station where patients were washed before admission.

The Little Red Woman, however, did not rejoin us. The Major had forbidden her to do any more work for three months; and to prevent her attempting anything he took her into his own house. But she was as irrepressible as ever. She now took the Austrian prisoners under her wing, and made herself busy advising the Italian Consulate on how to help them, for Italy was still neutral in those days, and her Consul had been asked to look after the interests of the Central Powers.

We had heard that a consignment of boots and other

comforts had arrived from Salonika, and were not in the least surprised, therefore, when one morning the Little Red Woman arrived with a fiacre load of them for the prisoners near us, which she proceeded to distribute forthwith. This, however, did not please the official mind of the O.C. P. of W. Camp. He said the boots must go into the magazine, and be doled out to the prisoners as required. Back went the Little Woman hot foot to the G.O.C., General Popovitch, demanding the head of the O.C. P. of W. Camp on a charger. The General, of course, smiled at her and told her to do as she liked. She returned in triumph. But the O.C. Camp was not to be put down like this. He asked for a written order, and refused to allow her inside his camp without one.

"The boots belong to the prisoners, and I am their official custodian," he said.

The Little Red Woman, however, was not going to hand over valuable boots to any official. She wanted to see with her own eyes that the men had them, and back the whole consignment went to the Consulate again. How they settled the quarrel I forget, but I am quite sure the Little Woman had the best of it.

It was this episode, I think, which reminded me of the utter lack of medical attention I had seen in this P. of W. Camp some weeks before, and now that work was slackening down I thought that something could be done to alleviate it. I told Dr. Bellingham Smith of the No. 2 Serbian Relief Unit about it. We went over to see the Commandant, and arranged to inspect the prisoners on alternate days, sending any sick man we found into hospital. I believe I inspected them once. Things seemed to me to be going on splendidly. And then a curious thing happened, at least it seemed curious to me, but the others said they had been expecting it for some time.

We had a Serbian officer in one of the small wards. He was a big, powerful man, and had nursed his father,

his mother and two sisters—all that was left of his family, through typhus. Every one of them had died, and now he had caught the disease himself. Unfortunately, every time James or any of the Austrian orderlies came near him, he became almost maniacal, for the sight of their uniform used to make him see red. I had to put two of our English orderlies on him continuously, and was myself up two or three nights at frequent intervals helping to keep him in bed. I had an intense desire to save him; but, of course, he died.

I seemed to lose grip after that. I had seen many men die, but this somehow seemed to finish me, and quite suddenly, to my surprise, I broke down. I suppose I must have been very much overworked. I had lost four stone in weight in two months, and could not eat.

I asked Barclay to take over for a few days; and now the No. 2 Serbian Relief Unit made a definite offer to relieve us of our work.

The date of our contract was up; but, of course, we knew that the British Red Cross would renew it if we wished to remain. We had a consultation over it. The position was that the Chief must soon return in any case. Barclay, on the other hand, wanted to remain. Sherlock and Steve, we knew, would be useless for any hard work for some months. Sister Rowntree had a brother in the Paget Unit who was going home; she had her own work in London calling her; and, if the rest of us decided to return, she, too, was quite willing.

When I was at Vrintski I had been offered command of the No. 2 British Red Cross Unit, but felt at the time I could not undertake the post with justice to them or myself. I had talked the matter over with Captain Bennett, the head of the unit, who was returning home, and suggested he should offer it to Barclay. Now that we seemed to be on the verge of breaking up, Barclay was inclined to accept.

Before deciding anything, however, we thought we had better ask the men what they would like to do.

They all said they would like to return, none of them wished to sign on again. The unit in fact, as a driving force, was dead. The men were tired. We were all tired.

It was decided that Barclay should accept the post offered him, and Steve and Sherlock, if they liked, could go up with him there to convalesce.

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The end came quite quietly, and yet suddenly. There was hardly a word from anyone. We just melted away like passengers from a ship after a long voyage. The men were sent to quarters in the town. I took over the Chief's rooms in Uskub for a day or so. Sister Rowntree went to a hotel. We spent a morning getting passports viséd at the French and Italian Consulates, and collecting our kit. We called formally on various Serbian friends, and took an emotional farewell of our old Commandant, Major Suskalovitch. There was a final little dinner at the Drinoski, and we were ready to leave.

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A lot of people came to see us off. Two of the Paget Unit were also coming with us. The Little Red Woman was on the platform, but she refused to say good-bye.

"I am coming to Salonique," she said. "It will be some days before that you can sail. I will be there to say 'Spogum' (farewell)."

* * * * * * * *

The train rumbled through the night. Sister Rowntree, her brother, two nurses and I were in the Wagon-lits. I could not sleep. I could not believe it was all over. I lived again and again through the months that had passed; but towards morning I dozed off, to wake at the frontier.

A smart little Serbian officer came in to see me. He

was very spick and span, very bright and cheery. It was six months since I had seen him on the way through. He was just the same. He brought me a pile of English illustrated papers. They were addressed to all sorts of people, but that did not worry him in the least. Apparently he took what he wanted, and sent on what he did not fancy.

"Will you be coming back to Serbie?" he asked politely.

"Perhaps," I answered. "Next year."

"Ah! A year's time. It will be all over then. In two months the Russians will be in Buda-Pesth," he retorted.

How little he or I knew. That was in March 1915.

* * * * * * * *

Fourteen days later we were in London.

FINIS.

EPILOGUE

WHAT HAPPENED TO THEM ALL

EPILOGUE

WHAT HAPPENED TO THEM ALL

"BUT," said Lilange, after she had read the manuscript through, "you can't leave off like this. I want to know what became of all these people. I want to know did the Little Red Woman really see you off at Salonika. I want to know what happened to Steve. I want to know how the epidemic was stopped. I want— "

"You're asking really for another book," I said. "But I can probably tell you all you need know, quite shortly. The Little Woman did arrive in Salonika in time to see us off. We had considerable trouble, however, before we got there. The Greeks were badly frightened by the epidemic, and treated us all as pariahs. We were stopped at Guminitza, the "station sanitaire " on the frontier, and everyone had to get out and be medically inspected. The doctor wasn't a bad fellow, but he knew nothing of typhus, obviously, for he looked for all the wrong things. Then our kit bags were taken by dirty porters to a big steam steriliser just off the platform, and everything in them baked for ten minutes. It was quite a useless precaution, because, although they spoiled all my leather things and melted my top-boots into a pasty mass, they never thought of sterilising the clothes we wore, which probably were much more dangerous.

"Eventually we were allowed to proceed; but at Salonika we were again inspected, our names and temporary addresses taken, and we were told to report each morning at the Public Health Department for the next

ten days. I went there the following day as instructed. On the day after, the Little Red Woman arrived and we went together. But on both occasions the authorities seemed so surprised I should have troubled to do so, I didn't go again. Nothing happened, and we sailed five days later.

"The Little Red Woman dined with us on the Messageries Maratimes boat on the night we left for Marsailles; and the last we saw of her was a small, rather pathetic figure in the moonlight, waving a handkerchief, and calling '*Spogum—spogum—spogum!*' from the pier.

"Afterwards we heard of her at intervals from Moscow, from Riga, and finally from Georgia—always keen, always active, always working in the most impossible places. Now none of us have heard of her for over two years, and I wonder. I hope that all is well with her—but I wonder.

"Barclay made a success of our No. 2 Unit at Vrintski until the place was captured by the Austrians in the great debâcle of October 1915. Later he was repatriated through Switzerland.

"Sherlock you have seen. He came through the awful retreat across Albania unscathed, and was later on in Mesopotamia.

"Stretton, the first to leave us, nearly died of a fourth attack of relapsing fever on the way home; so we were very glad we had not kept him until the typhus came. But the old war-horse would not be satisfied. I met him once again in uniform in Egypt.

"Sister Rowntree you know all about. We saw her only a few weeks ago, looking as if she had never heard of Serbie or typhus.

"And the epidemic. Well, I can give you some figures now. There were half a million cases in the three months of January, February and March, and over one hundred and twenty thousand deaths—all this in a population less than half that of London. But

during the next three months the epidemic was practically killed, simply by getting rid of the lice which it is now known carry the disease from contact to contact. The English epidemic of 1865 lasted eighteen months, although it was quite a trivial affair in comparison. So you see what can be done when the cause is known.

" The way they set about it was quite simple. First they stopped all passenger trains and all Army leave for a month, so that infected soldiers, refugees, peasants, prisoners of war could not travel up and down the line all over the country spreading the disease. During this period the railway carriages and stations were disinfected, in order that everything could restart free from disease. Meanwhile also the Army was tackled. A big disinfecting station was started at Mladenovac, and disinfecting trains travelled up and down, delousing by steam sterilization the uniforms and equipment of all the men in the front line. At the same time disinfecting plant was built in all towns and villages, and everyone had their clothes deloused.

" The consequence was that, though at the beginning of March there were one thousand five hundred fresh admissions to hospital daily, in less than three weeks they were down to five hundred, and in a month to one hundred. The disease was wiped out—and all so simply. It took one big mind to devise, thousands of willing workers to execute, and the thing was done.

" In its way, it is one of the most dramatic triumphs of mind over disease that has ever been achieved."*

" Yes, it sounds rather wonderful," said Lilange softly. " But what a horror, what an awful horror ! "

There was a pause for some little time. I was thinking back, and I fancy she did not like to break in too abruptly. But presently she said :

* The technical reader, who wishes to know more about it, should consult Col. Hunter's account in the " Proceedings of the Royal Society of Medicine " Vol. XIII. No. 2, Dec. 1919, or the volume on " Typhus Fever in Serbia " published by the American Red Cross (Harvard University Press 1920.)

"Do you mind. There's still Steve and the Chief."

I smiled over at her.

"Yes. Steve. He got back all right, but the disease had left a permanent mark on him. He wanted to join the R.A.M.C., and, oddly enough, they sent him to me at 'Millbank' to examine. Of course, I couldn't pass him for active service, and he knew it. But I sent him to Sir Frederick Treves, and the Red Cross found useful work for him in France. Then he went back to Australia, and I haven't heard of him since. But any day I expect him to blow in on me, and if he does you shall certainly meet him. I have a very warm corner in my heart for Steve."

Lilange smiled at me.

"I'm sure I'd like him, too!"

"We'll ask him to dinner, and I'll have olives and salted almonds, and lots of little *bon-bon* dishes full of candies all round him," she said.

"He's a very real person to me," she added. "I can picture him; but your Chief somehow seems rather a shadowy figure. Did you ever hear of him again? I suppose not."

"Oh yes, I heard of him. That was the oddest thing. It was about three years later. I was working in my office at Kantara on the Suez Canal one hot Egyptian afternoon. It must have been soon after our break through on the Gaza-Beersheba front, late in 1917.

"Wood, my D.A.D.M.S., and I were very busy, for I had taken over medical charge of all the country from Jerusalem to Suez, and it was an enormous job.

"We were arranging to push new units—Hospitals, Casualty Clearing Stations, Field Laboratories, Sanitary Sections, Advanced Depôts Medical Stores, a Water Testing Company—into the recently-captured territory. To fix up the details of all these things, 'files' were constantly passing, conferences being held, memos. written to the other departments, particularly, 'A,' 'Q,' and A.D.O.S., besides letters to our own S.M.O.'s, the heads

of the various units concerned, and last and most important the D.M.S. All the while, between times, wires reporting the movements of hospital trains, giving daily 'bed states' of our medical units, announcing the arrival and departure of hospital ships kept coming in, and D.R.L.S. messages arriving. In short, all the activities of a big office after an advance, preparing for another 'push,' were in full swing.

"We were thoroughly happy, Wood and I. We liked the work. Across the Sweet Water Canal, behind my office, a squad of coolies from the Egyptian Labour Corps were unloading 'tibbin,' singing in a plaintive monotone the inevitable '*Kam Lil' O Kam Yoem*' as they hauled in unison. My front windows looked on to the Suez Canal itself, and on the far side, when I looked up, I could see the hospital barge 'Indiana,' with Capt. Mathison in charge, taking on its bi-weekly cargo of sick and wounded British troops for our big base hospital at Port Said.

"It was very hot, and Wood and I were working in our shirt sleeves, tunics hung on our chairs behind, Sam Browne's lying in front of us on our tables. Presently Wood's telephone rang, and I looked up to hear what the message was about."

"'Yes. That you Mac. Oh, yes.' There was a pause while he listened to the other end speaking, and then:—'Righto. Send them along,' and he hung up the receiver.

"'Staff Captain 'A' says three Medical Officers have arrived to report,' he said.

"'Good. We want all we can get. Wonder when G.H.Q. will raise that extra hundred we need,' I answered, before resuming the perusal of the 'Progress Report' from the C.O.O. on the equipment of our advanced C.C.S.'s on the Jerusalem-Jaffa front. After an interval our sergeant came in.

"'Three officers to report, sir.'

"The D.A.D.M.S. turned up the morning file on his

table, produced a 'Diosmoany' wire, and placed it in front of me.

"'Here they are, sir,' he said. 'One O.C. Sanitary Section, a Captain, one Bacteriologist, also a Captain, and one Lieutenant, a Surgeon. The Sanitary Section man is for '105' isn't he?' he asked. I nodded. 'We want a bacteriologist for the Field Laboratory at Gaza to replace Jepson whom we're transferring to Ismailia,' he continued.

"'Yes. That's right,' I said.

"'Where do you want to post the Surgeon?' he queried.

"'They're short at the 44th Stationary. Let's send him there,' I answered. 'Colonel Mackenzie is getting rather peevish because we haven't filled him up before.'

"Wood smiled, and turned to the waiting N.C.O.

"'Right, Rowlands. You can bring them in, one by one.' Automatically we reached back for our thin tunics of Egyptian gabardine, and picked up our Sam Browne's from in front of us. Receiving new officers into one's Command cannot be done in shirt sleeves, even on a sweltering Egyptian afternoon.

"The two Captains came in, one after the other, were informed of their destinations, given 'movement orders' for their journey, and asked to wait in the ante-room for typed copies of their instructions. They saluted and retired.

"'Now the other officer,' said Wood, 'and then we can get back to work. Lord! It is hot.'

"A tall thin man, with a slight stoop, wearing the South African ribbons and that of the Order of St. Sava entered. We looked at one another. He was the last person in the world I had ever expected to see again, and suddenly the years between seemed to roll back. Instead of the dazzling sunshine of Egypt outside, the sand, the blue waters of the Canal, the chanting coolies, the neat little boat carrying its load of carefully-tended sick and wounded to the beautifully clean hospital at

Port Said, I saw the mud and rain of Uskub, the horrible pest-house hospital, heard the song of the dead played by a Serbian band in the distance, felt that if I turned my head and went outside I should smell the sickly odour of dead and dying Austrians in the straw. I found that in spite of my tight tunic and the sweltering heat I was shivering; for somehow at the sight of him the whole incredible nightmare of it all came back to me, as vividly as if it had happened on the previous day."

"It wasn't the Chief!" said Lilange incredulously.

"It was," I answered.

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